$1.50

CHRONICLES OF CULTURE

LETTERS & ARTS

MORALS & MANNERS

What Are Words For?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOLUME 7 · NUMBER 12 · DECEMBER 1983

Contents

4 Comment — Stephen Tanner

5 *Social Register*

6 Jorge Luis Borges
James Burnham

Opinions & Views

8 Writing Poetry & Striking Poses — Robert C. Steensma
—Edward Callan: *Auden*
—Larry Smith: *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*

10 Self-Indulgence Made Simple — Lee Congdon
—Peter Clecak: *America's Quest for the Ideal Self*

14 One Way Out — Joseph Schwartz
—Walker Percy: *Lost in the Cosmos*

16 A Flounder and the Shark — Henry L. Mason III
—Adam B. Ulam: *Dangerous Relations*

20 Dark Contract — Ronald Berman
—Matthew J. Bruccoli: *James Gould Cozzens*

22 Making Hay with the Southern Sun — Clyde Wilson
—Walter Taylor: *Faulkner's Search for a South*
—Thomas Wolfe: *Welcome to Our City*

24 A Dubious Discourse — Gary S. Vasilash
—Christopher Norris: *Deconstruction*
—Antony Easthope: *Poetry as Discourse*

27 Twinkle, Twinkle — Alan J. Levine
—Daniel Graham: *High Frontier*
—Thomas Karas: *The New High Ground*
—James Canan: *War in Space*

28 Getting & Spending — Gavin D. Arbuckle
—*Working-Class America*; Edited by Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz
—A. David Silver: *The Entrepreneurial Life*
—Peter Carlson: *Roughneck*

30 A Man Among Mice — Allen G. Weakland
—William Manchester: *The Last Lion*

32 Open—Or Empty? — Guy S. Brown
—Dante Germino: *Political Philosophy and the Open Society*
—Elisabeth Young-Bruehl: *Hannah Arendt*

Commendables

36 Life in the Happy Lane: *Overdrive*
Real Fiction: *Narrative Fiction*

37 Stunning Scrimshaw: *Moby-Dick*

In Focus

37 Red-Eye Express — Richard de Mille
—Timothy Leary: *Flashbacks*

38 Of Clerics and Cults: *By What Authority*

39 Faltering Christian Soldiers: *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America; A Documentary History of Religion in America*
At the Abyss: *Facing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons*

40 Conservative Imagination: *Disraeli*
Westward Directions: *Our Country and Our Culture*
Perceptibles

Waste of Money

41 Self-Actualizing Mammon — Steven Hayward
—Mary Lutyens: *Krishnamurti*
Of Sonnets and Slogans: *Langston Hughes*

42 Derailed Thinking: *The Celestial Steam Locomotive*

Screen

43 The Murdered City: *Mr. Mom*
The Incertitude of Self: *The Return of Martin Guerre*

Music

44 Power, Passion & Performance — Robert R. Reilly

Art

45 Strange but Suggestive — Stephen Macaulay
—Michel Foucault: *This Is Not a Pipe*

46 Misconceptions, Misrepresentations, and Serendipities: *Art in the Seventies; The Way of the Masks; Eskimo Masks; Northwest Coast Indian Graphics; Kwakiutl Art; Eskimo Art*

Correspondence

48 Letter from Hilton Head Island: Enjoy & Reflect — E. Stake Salisbury

The American Proscenium

49 High Technology

Journalism

49 *Time's* Precision

50 Epistemological Chutzpah
Signification of Silence

51 Fideism

Liberal Culture

9 History

13 Heresy

14 Veracities

Vol. 7, No. 11 November 1983

Conservatism as Novelty

Comment: Tyrmand; O'Neil on Gage *(Eleni)*; Vasilash on Moss and de Borchgrave, Ryan *(Monimbó, Deadlines)*; Moser on Miller and McElvaine *(FDR, Down & Out in the Great Depression)*; Schwartz on Wilson, Prokosch *(The Forties, Voices)*; McInerny on Fairbairns, Young-Bruehl *(Stand We At Last, Vigil)*; Pradl on Peikoff *(The Ominous Parallels)*; Christensen on Medawar, Janov *(Pluto's Republic, Imprints)*; Haynes on Straight *(After Long Silence)*; Sniegoski on Middleton *(Crossroads of Modern Warfare)*; Clarke on Feeley, Morris *(Court Reform on Trial, Madness and the Criminal Law)*; C. Daly on Bermel *(Farce)*; Commendables; In Focus; Perceptibles; Waste of Money; Screen; Polemics & Exchanges; The American Proscenium; Journalism; Liberal Culture; Social Register.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHRONICLES OF
CULTURE
Vol. 7, No. 12 December 1983

What Are Words For?

Chronicles of Culture (ISSN 0163-1187) is published monthly by The Rockford Institute; President: John Howard. Editorial and business offices: 934 North Main Street, Rockford, Illinois 61103. Editorial phone: (815) 964-5054. Circulation phone: (815) 964-5811. Editor: Leopold Tyrmand; Associate Editor: Gary S. Vasilash; Managing Editor: Rebecca Woosley; Assistant Editor: Bryce Christensen; Editorial Secretary: LeAnn Manning; Publisher: Richard Vaughan; Production Manager: Lindy Ellingwood; Composition Manager: Anita Fedora. Printed by Wilson-Hall Co. Technical Services: Marge Wollschlager Composition. Subscriptions: $18.00 one year.

Cover: Original vignette by Warren Chappell. Page three: "Costumi Fiorentini del Secolo XV," Scuola de Antonio Pollaiolo, from the MacLeish Collection, The Rare Print Cabinet, Rockford College Library. Graphic materials within the text from *Chairs Through the Ages,* edited by Harold H. Hart (New York: Dover Publications, 1982), an unabridged republication of *Chairs* (New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1977). Copyright © 1983 by The Rockford Institute. All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENT

Words are for communicating, are they not? If we begin with this commonplace assumption, it becomes obvious that words today have fallen upon difficult times. On every hand we see them ignored, devalued, betrayed, demeaned, emasculated, and otherwise abused and victimized. Consider, for example, the outrages perpetrated upon language in the areas of advertising, bureaucratic obfuscating, hack work in the social sciences, partisan politics, and international relations. And future prospects are not encouraging. Increasing evidence indicates that, on the whole, high school and college students do not speak, read, or write very well.

These forms of mistreatment and neglect of language are disquieting to the respecter of words, but familiarity with them has slightly diminished their urgency. At least for the optimist, they seem in some measure correctable by increased language awareness and better schooling. Recently, a more alarming challenge to words has emerged. It is more alarming for two reasons: first, it originates among the scholars, critics, and theorists of language and literature, the traditional keepers of the flame, the devoted stewards of language; second, it transcends issues concerning the misuse of language and questions all that we take for granted about language, experience, and the possibilities of human communication.

This challenge is becoming apparent in a variety of literary and cultural manifestations but finds its most explicit formulation in recent literary theory, specifically in deconstruction, a movement spawned by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida and a group of American Derrideans at Yale. Although a minority voice in relation to teaching and criticism as a whole, deconstruction has been highly influential, particularly in graduate schools.

It starts out by rigorously questioning the assumed correspondence between mind, meaning, and the concept of method that claims to unite them. It focuses upon the impossibility of making expression coincide with what has to be expressed, of making the sign coincide with what it signifies. In short, the deconstructive effort is to show that truth and word never coincide. Language is viewed as an autonomous system parallel with but not pointing to the world of things. Literature, likewise, is an autonomous system contingent with but not directly pointing to life. As Derrida insists, the "literal" meaning of writing is "metaphoricity itself."

The tenuous relationship between word and reality has long been appreciated, of course, but what deconstruction claims is that the possibility of gaining a clear understanding of the written word is an illusion. The imprecision of the written word, formerly regarded as an intellectual challenge to writer and reader, is now considered an insurmountable barrier to any degree of certainty. The meaning of any written material (all of which is called "text") is indeterminate, susceptible to endless deconstruction or reinterpretation. All interpretation is misinterpretation. Deconstruction seeks, in Geoffrey Hartman's phrase, "the eclipse of voice by text." By "text" he means language at play among its internal possibilities, released from all the old claims of meaning as voice, personal presence, and dialogue.

Derrida, in *Spurs,* for example, devotes pages to discussing a marginal jotting in Nietzsche's notebooks: "I have forgotten my umbrella." Ingeniously he plays with the possible "meanings" of this sentence and concludes that its context is irretrievable and its meaning a total enigma. It is no more "significant" than any other passage in Nietzsche's writing because it, like any text, is liberated from the author's intentions. It has no decidable meaning, and "the hermeneut cannot but be provoked and disconcerted by its play." In a similar display of deconstructionist ingenuity, J. Hillis Miller answers essays by Wayne Booth and M. H. Abrams by devoting an entire essay to deconstructing a sentence containing a phrase from each of those critics: "The deconstructionist reading of a given work 'is plainly and simply parasitical' (Booth's phrase) on 'the obvious and univocal reading' (Abrams' phrase)." The process involves elaborately tracing the etymology of the words, analyzing the stories related to the etymology, exploring connotations, and otherwise demonstrating the indeterminacy of the sentence's meaning.

In *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (1982), Christopher Norris argues that "Deconstruction neither denies nor really affects the commonsense view that language exists to communicate meaning. It *suspends* that view for its own specific purpose of seeing what happens when the writs of convention no longer run." The distinction between "denies" and "suspends" in this statement is more apparent than real, and Norris later admits that the zeal for deconstruction has not always produced Derrida's argumentative rigor. For many, its appeal "rests very largely on the promise of an open-ended free play of style and speculative thoughts, untrammeled by 'rules' of any kind." This is a natural tendency, for if interpretation is inevitably involved in a chain of proliferating sense that it can neither arrest nor fully comprehend, then the critic is effectively absolved of all responsibility for limiting the play of his own imagination or trying to ascertain the author's intentions.

The essential error of deconstruction lies in its being the latest version of rationalism divorced from experiential knowledge of reality. One is reminded of Zeno's paradox. An arrow loosed at a target will never reach it because it must first traverse half the distance, and in turn half that distance, and so on infinitely. Compare the deconstructionist contemplating the sign near a blasting area: "Danger—run for your life!" What a delicious sentence for interpretive play. Think of the dozens of meanings of "run," and imagine what the resourceful decon-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

structionist could do with "life." The conclusion, of course, would be that the text has no decidable meaning. But common sense would dictate neither standing in front of the target nor dallying near the warning sign.

The programmatic uncertainty of deconstruction is actually a form of rationalistic terrorism, a style of accusation. Its central thrust is a denial of the primary assumptions of Western metaphysics: that the universe has a center of meaning and purpose, that man has an essence which by virtue of the logos is vitally linked with that center and that truth is a desirable and obtainable object of human quest. Indeed, deconstruction denies not only the correspondence between words and reality, but also between the Word and reality.

Ultimately, more important than the challenge of deconstruction in itself is the fact that it is an extreme manifestation —a symptom—of a larger contemporary condition or tendency. The retreat from certainty and descent into solipsism resulting from a skepticism concerning words is reflected widely in our culture—in literature, films, journalism, and academia. Particularly in the humanities, evaluation—which requires standards based on some sense of certainty, some confidence that words communicate reality—is a diminishing practice. Once the beloved twin sister of Interpretation, Evaluation has been banished. But the question "What are words for?" inevitably requires an evaluative answer. It is essentially a moral question. This is the reason deconstruction and related attitudes and approaches have made such surprising inroads in the humanities despite the alarm of so many traditional humanists. Those humanists, having abandoned moral evaluation and succumbed to skepticism regarding the grounds for certainty in value judgments, are, on the whole, ineffectual in countering the arguments of radical interpretive theory. They are infected by the very disease they wish to cure, and consequently are reticent and embarrassed to meet the challenge on moral terms.

It is important, of course, to recognize fully what words can *not* do. In this respect, the best of these radical theorists have done us a favor. One cannot read them without gaining a deeper appreciation of the limitations of language as a system signifying reality. But the danger inherent in such sophisticated arguments is that of losing respect for and confidence in what words *can* do. This danger is reflected in contemporary fiction that tends to equate fiction and reality. Carried to its ultimate extreme, this belief in the interchangeability of fiction and reality can lead to an arrogant disrespect for the integrity of both. If the nature of language precludes certainty, then things tend to become equally credible, generating a paradoxical situation in which skepticism coexists with appalling forms of credulity. Such confusion has its ultimate source in the Derridean error of viewing the decentered text of indeterminate meaning as analogous to a decentered universe of indeterminate meaning.

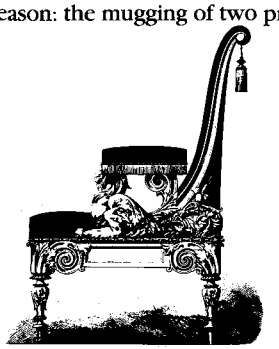
As mysterious and tenuous as the relation between words and reality is, and as imperfect as human communication has proved to be, there is still ample room for human certainty as long as man employs the full range of his human faculties. In the beginning was the word—and so it will be in the end.

—Stephen Tanner

Dr. Tanner teaches English at Brigham Young University.

Social Register

With a sense of sweet justice muted only by the most basic human considerations, we read of one event in New York's end-of-summer season: the mugging of two prominent socialites, big stars on the Manhattan lib jet-set firmament, both shining lights of *Vogue* and *WWD*. The deliciously exciting romp took place in the East End-Carl Schurz Park area, one of the most exquisite preserves of Gotham's high life. Actually, the innocent victims were strolling leisurely toward Gracie Mansion, NY Mayor Ed Koch's residence, to attend a reception.



Innocent victims? Legally and formally—of course. But in the abstruse layers of existence where metaphysics reigns, no one knows for sure what is bringing about misery, violence, evil. The pair, robbed at gunpoint on the same block where the city's Police Commissioner lives, consisted of Senator Christopher Dodd from Connecticut, one of the most liberal members of the U.S. Senate, and one Amanda Burden, a darling of the grape-pickers-benefit cocktail parties set whose support for the "needy" has never interfered with her millionaire lifestyle. Each is representative of the kind of liberal who has rarely stepped away from private schools and limousines into the real world, and has nothing but venomous contempt for the Iowa farmer and Georgia grocer who demur at paying taxes to support welfare programs and who have serious reservations about the abolition of the death penalty for murderers, or the idea of giving up their guns. Both Sen. Dodd and Ms. Burden, judging by their past and current opinions expressed in the press, are gearing up for the fall season of parties, galas, $1000-a-plate dinners, and Tavern on the Green festivities to aid the El Salvador gangster guerrillas they see as noble freedom fighters entitled by dint of Cuban arms to "share" power with duly elected authorities. We are certain that the latest incident in NYC won't impair their social élan, but we also suspect that social justice has somehow been served. To our mind, a mugged "progressive," even if he doesn't turn conservative overnight, somehow makes today's America a bit more equitable. Thus, mussing Sen. Dodd's hairdo and grabbing at Ms. Burden's jewelry evokes only a smidgen of compassion among those who still believe in fairness. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On September 27, 1983, the jury of The Ingersoll Foundation awarded the T. S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing to Jorge Luis Borges and the Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters to James Burnham. The prizes will be presented to Mr. Borges and Mr. Burnham on December 8 at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Chicago, Illinois.

Jorge Luis Borges

Jorge Luis Borges is anything but easy to accept, absorb, comprehend, and emotionally embrace. It's not that his poems, short stories, and essays are all hard to read, for some of them have the lucidity and pure tone of a crystal form seen and struck. Others are admittedly trying, especially for those not cognizant of Argentinian history, versed in Anglo-Saxon, comfortable with Bishop Berkeley—to name but a few areas in which he has delved. There is obviously a formidable aspect to Borges. It might not be called a problem, for Borges wrote, "The word *problem* may be an insidious *petitio principii.* To speak of the *Jewish problem* is to postulate that the Jews are a problem; it is to predict (and recommend) persecution, plunder, shooting, beheading, rape. . . . Another disadvantage of fallacious problems is that they bring about solutions that are equally fallacious." Since he is demanding, there is a tendency for some of those who approach his work to treat it as a *problem,* to be unnecessarily cryptic and vague about it, as if incomprehensibility is an ideal. This has proven to be a particular thicket. As Norman Thomas di Giovanni, a close collaborator of Borges's and a translator of many of his works, observed, "a lot of the early translators were intimidated by Borges's reputation for being deep. They equated being deep with being obscure, and they also associated Borges with dreams and a dreamlike, or vague, prose." Commentators have been worse. It's indicative of the contemporary madness for inexplicability, or, in Borges's words, "our modern worship of complexity." Consider, for example, the case of "The Library of Babel," a story that opens, "The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast air shafts between, surrounded by very low railings." When Borges wrote the story, in 1941, he was employed at a municipal library in Buenos Aires, where he stayed, as he put it, for "nine years of solid unhappiness." While there, he wrote on his lunch hours and during any other time he could snatch. "The Library of Babel" is—if anything can be so designated—a paradigmatic Borges story. There are clues, ciphers, mirrors, labyrinths found within, indicating his various interests: detective fiction ("The Garden of Branching Paths," another early composition, received an award from *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*), Poe, Stevenson, Chesterton, Burton, the Kabbalah, Gnosticism . . . and lists. (Lists are some-

continued on page 7, column 2

James Burnham

Few 20th-century writers have moved so dramatically from the left to the right as James Burnham, and fewer still have articulated so clearly the moral and cultural validity of such a shift. Born in Chicago in 1905 and educated at Princeton and Balliol, Burnham began a 26-year career as a teacher and professor of philosophy at New York University in 1929. Shortly thereafter he became a Trotskyite, joining with Sidney Hook and A. J. Muste in the founding of the American Workers' Party in 1933 and editing *The New International* for several years. He never fully accepted the premises of Marxist thought, however, and in 1937 he began a factional dispute with dogmatic Trotskyites, including Trotsky himself, over the responsibility of all true revolutionaries to uphold the Soviet regime. That dispute was finally resolved by Burnham's turning permanently away from Marxist thought in early 1940. He later explained his decision as a choice between ideology and reality: "For some years I had accepted this empty ideological mumbo-jumbo. Then, one day, I tried to relate the formulas to reality. On such a scrutiny it did not take long for the formulas to evaporate."

After his repudiation of communism and "socialism in general," Burnham gave his allegiance to progressive liberalism. In *The Managerial Revolution,* an instant worldwide best-seller upon its publication in 1941, he argued that the free market of entrepreneurial capitalism was giving way to the managed economy presided over by corporate and government administrators. In part, he saw this as an inevitable development because of the efficiency of the new order in meeting complex modern problems. However, he cautioned that even in America this movement was "in the same *direction* as Stalinism and Nazism" and could conceivably give rise to similar terror, purges, and mass upheavals.

As a contributing member of the editorial board of *Partisan Review,* Burnham helped such prominent writers as Lionel Trilling, Mary McCarthy, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. to define liberal orthodoxy during the 40's and early 50's. As early as 1943, though, he served notice with the publication of *The Machiavellians* that he was far more realistic and far less attracted to idealistic rhetoric than were most of his colleagues.

Recognizing communism as a genuine and primary threat to democracy and humane order, in 1947 he published *The Struggle for the World,* a prognostic announcement of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cold War. Heartened by the Marshall Plan and the Berlin airlift, Burnham published *The Coming Defeat of Communism* in 1950. But he soon realized that he had been overly optimistic and in *Containment or Liberation?* (1952) he delivered this brilliant but scathing analysis of the inadequacy of the Western response to communism:

> If the United States and its allies are serious about containment, they are saying to the Soviet leadership: Move into a new territory outside the recognized boundaries of your sphere . . . and we will resist, even by arms if necessary. Stay at home . . . and we will not interfere in any way. Do what you want with the Poles, Czechs, Rumanians, Balts, Slovaks . . . Fill your slave-labor camps. Perpetrate your genocides. Organize the industry and manpower of your great sphere into a colossal war-making machine . . . Do all these things freely and without apprehension. So long as you keep the Red Army on your side of the line, we will neither interfere nor intervene.

Not surprisingly, Burnham perceived the kernel of truth within Senator McCarthy's anticommunist polemics during the early 50's. When other liberals dismissively labeled everyone seriously concerned about communist subversion a "McCarthyite," he knew that something had gone wrong. He consequently signaled his final break with left-liberal beliefs by resigning from *Partisan Review* and by publishing *The Web of Subversion* (1954), in which he followed irrefutable evidence to the logical conclusion that Soviet agents had penetrated numerous congressional and governmental agencies, including even the White House staff.

Resigning his professorship, he then accepted a position as a founding editor of *National Review.* There, for more than 20 years, he wrote penetrating critiques of international affairs, while periodically lecturing at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. His insight into domestic institutions produced *Congress and the American Tradition* in 1959, but his primary concern continued to be with the global threat of communist totalitarianism. Accordingly, he worked closely with the Asian Peoples Anti-Communist League and similar organizations. He was also a director of the Free Europe University and a founder of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Burnham was not sanguine about the future, however, so long as liberalism remained culturally ascendant. In his last major book, *Suicide of the West* (1964), he demonstrated in a remarkable tour de force that liberal misconceptions concerning fundamental human goodness and equality, American guilt and Third World beneficence, can only, in the long run, permit communism to destroy the West. "Liberalism," he declared, "permits Western civilization to be reconciled to dissolution; and this function its formulas will enable it to serve right through to the very end, if matters turn out that way."

Fortunately, Burnham's intellectual efforts have helped to insure that matters will *not* turn out that way. By dissecting the regnant intellectual myths, he has helped establish a new and more enduring counterfashion in thought, as was appropriately recognized when President Reagan recently awarded him the Medal of Freedom. Quoted and reprinted, his books and articles will long shape the perceptions of intelligent men and women committed to preserving a civilization of social freedoms. □

Borges

continued from page 6, column 1

thing that he shares with another blind bard, Homer. While that may seem too strong a comparison, one need only consider the other poets and writers who have practiced their art in this century to realize that Borges is truly a rare man of enduring value and so is deserving of praise of the first rank.) Borges, then 42 (born in 1899), hadn't been writing short stories for long when he created "The Library of Babel," though he had been publishing poems and essays for 20 years. Being acutely aware of literary influences on writers and recognizing continuity, he has suggested that writers "create" their own predecessors. He calls "The Library of Babel," a tale of endless wandering through the galleries in search of the one book among the seemingly infinite number that will make all clear, "My Kafkian story." The Library, like the Castle, is a symbol writ large. Yet some couldn't be satisfied with that: after all, the story is by Borges, therefore it is a *problem.* Borges points out, "The number of books and shelves that I recorded in the story were literally what I had at my elbow. Clever critics have worried over those ciphers, and generously endowed them with mystic significance." What isn't there they see with complete clarity. A result of the Borges-as-Problem approach is that Borges has been securely tucked away into university filing cabinets.

The before-mentioned difficulty with Borges is that he is really two men: Borges the writer and Borges the private person. Complicating matters (there is nothing *easy* about him) are the facts that "Borges" appears as a character in stories and poems and that, as in the case of "The Library of Babel," life and art merge. Still, Borges has repeatedly called attention to the fact that the distinction must be made. About both the writer and the private person, one thing can be said: both are conservative in the largest sense of the adjective. Of course, as the man in question is Borges, nothing is cut-and-dried. His biographer, Emir Rodriguez Monegal, writes:

> The man Borges may vote conservative, reject socialism of any kind, and love strong regimes. The text we call Borges does not stoop to that kind of compromise: it is plainly in favor of skepticism, doubts reality has any meaning, and accepts the

continued on page 42

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Writing Poetry & Striking Poses

Edward Callan: *Auden: A Carnival of Intellect;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Larry Smith: *Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Poet-at-Large;* Southern Illinois University Press; Carbondale.

by Robert C. Steensma

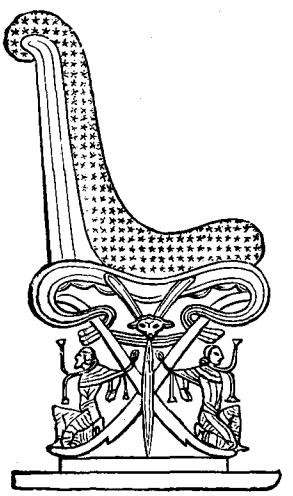
"When he wriggles," Ambrose Bierce once wrote of the politician, "he mistakes the agitation of his tail for the trembling of the edifice." Bierce might well have said the same about modern writers who cannot distinguish between propaganda and art or between political sermons and poetry.

Within the last year college bulletin boards and newspapers have been flyspecked with announcements of demonstrations, teach-ins, and poetry readings devoted to attacks on nuclear energy, the arms race, and American policy in Central America. Most representative is a broadside from a group calling itself "Poets for Peace," an organization dedicated to working "on behalf of a weapons-free world." This manifesto is infested with implications about an imperialistic United States government which, through its goons in the Department of Defense, is responsible for all economic, social, political, and military unrest anywhere in the world. The piece is signed by a good many poets who are, presumably, intelligent enough to recognize its intellectual dishonesty.

This naiveté among literary people about political reality is hardly new or surprising. The history of European and American literature is marked by writers who have seen the reshaping of the world in terms of a peculiar social or political vision as their calling. Shelley's simplistic assertion in *A Defence of Poetry* (1820) that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" is symptomatic of the belief that writers should be social engineers as well as artists.

Among British and American writers, for example, Shelley, Ruskin, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and, currently, Norman Mailer have been afflicted with delusions of themselves as messiahs who will bring the gospel to the unenlightened, cure society of its many evils, and restore some kind of sociopolitical Eden among the satanic mills of the modern world. All too often, these people have started out to write belles lettres and ended up producing dreary tracts that appeal only to their narrow group of disciples. They mistake their intellectual squirming and caudal vibrations for the stirrings of art.

This penchant for linking social and political values to literature has been particularly evident in the 20th century. As early as 1908 John Macy approached the criticism of American literature from a distinctly Marxist perspective. In the 1930's Granville Hicks, C. Day Lewis, and V. F. Calverton, among many others, became apostles of the Marxist school of criticism which published its work in magazines such as *The New Masses* and *The Left Review.* Although the Russo-German friendship treaty and the coming of the Second World War muted these radical voices, they arose again in the 1960's to lead their intellectual groupies out of the desert and into the streets, the lecture halls, and the pages of publications like *The New York Review of Books, Village Voice,* and *Mother Jones.* Anyone on a college campus during those noisy days remembers the strident anti-Americanism that characterized so much of the peace movement.



But fairness demands an acknowledgment that there has also always been in Western literature a tradition of honest and honorable dissent among writers who felt deeply about the course their culture was taking. Milton, the 18th-century English satirists, and Thoreau are just a few examples of writers who looked at their worlds from the perspective of history, tradition, and values and with a very deeply held love for art and humanity; they saw clearly the dangers posed by an amoral and materialistic modernism. And they were not willing to prostitute their writing to literary fad or gratification of the ego.

Two modern poets who illustrate this contrast in social criticism are W. H. Auden and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the subjects of recent biographies by Edward Callan and Larry Smith. Auden is widely and justly regarded as a major poet of our century, while Ferlinghetti, for the most part, is now considered as little more than a museum piece from the literary horror show of the 1960's. Both men have viewed poetry as a vehicle for political comment, and both have been connected with Marxism, but that's about as far as any comparisons can be drawn.

Auden is perhaps the most prolific poet in modern British literature, his collected edition running to some 30,000 lines (compared with Yeats's 14,000 and Eliot's 5,500). From the early 1930's until his death ten years ago, he worked easily with a complex variety of conventional verse forms—sonnet, villanelle, couplet, ballade, canzone, sestina, terza rima—and he experimented with more

Professor Steensma teaches English at the University of Utah.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exotic types such as the Welsh englyn and the Skaldic drott-kvaett. His work won him two Guggenheims, the Pulitzer and Bollingen prizes, and the National Book Award, as well as the professorship of poetry at Oxford.

During the late 1930's Auden became the premier poet of his generation. Influenced by writers as diverse as Hardy, Hopkins, Eliot, and Yeats, his work was almost neoclassical in its cool, ordered, balanced, polished, economic precision. For some time he flirted with Marxism, as did his friends Stephen Spender, C. Day Lewis, and Louise MacNiece, but by 1940 he was beginning to see it as nothing more than another hollow but dangerous philosophy which offered nothing to his or any other generation: "We hoped; we waited for the day/ The State would wither clean away,/ Expecting the Millennium/ That theory promised us would come,/ It didn't" ("New Year Letter, January 1, 1940"). Sensing the anxiety that pervaded the West before and after World War II, he sought to discover and assess the inner conflicts behind the sickness of modern society, an illness he saw as the result of modern man's loss of faith and tradition. Auden learned that loss and pain are constants in human experience and that the best artists have known this: "About suffering they were never wrong,/ The Old Masters: how well they understood/ Its human position: how it takes place/ While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along" ("Musée des Beaux Arts").

Auden strongly sensed that political solutions for many human problems were either impossible or unwise. The title character in "The Unknown Citizen," a short satire on the welfare state, is the darling of the advertisers and businessmen, the schools, the church, and the government because he does his job passably well, acts and thinks predictably, never acts as an individual, and never questions the statist philosophy. "But was he free? Was he happy?" Auden asks —and answers ironically, "Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard."

In *The Dyer's Hand* (1950) his distrust of the poet as prophet and of leftist utopianism is complete:

> A society which was really like a good poem, embodying the aesthetic virtues of beauty, order, economy, and subordination of detail to the whole, would be a nightmare of horror, for given the historical reality of actual men, such a society could only come into being through selective breeding, extermination of the physically and mentally unfit, absolute obedience to its Directors, and a large slave class kept out of sight in cellars.

Auden's stylistic deftness and his philosophic position were not immune to criticism, however. A lesser talent, the poet and critic Randall Jarrell, could carp, "we never step twice into the same Auden." But sensitive critics such as Callan see in Auden one of the more substantial poets of this century. In his close readings of Auden's work Callan shows how Auden moved away from his early fascination with political romanticism in the 1930's to a later awareness that such a false view of the world could produce not only a Yeats and a D. H. Lawrence but also a Hitler. Callan concludes that "no other writer has so consistently chosen for theme the gap between the world of consciousness where the responsibilities of freedom begin and the unconscious natural world where necessity rules."

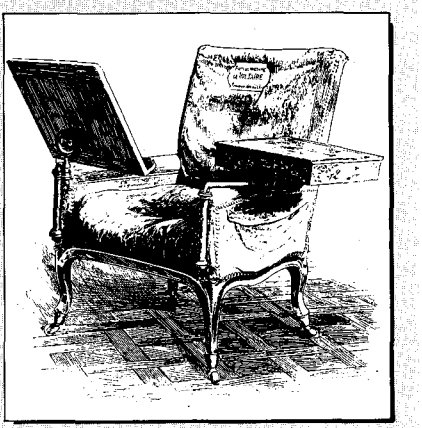
LIBERAL CULTURE

History

One James Goldman, the reviewer for *Bookworld*—the *Chicago Tribune's* proud (and only) title to highbrow intellectuality, passes his ultimate verdict on the nature of history:

> I see it as a source of heady entertainment. What is history, after all, but stories? Like a novel or a play, it is a record of the things that people say and do.

Come on Tacitus, Vico, Toynbee . . . there's no need to be serious. Hold it—Hegel, have you heard this one? □



Lawrence Ferlinghetti is just the kind of political romantic Auden warned against: the would-be artist who mouths trendy and revolutionary clichés, unthinkingly attacks traditions and values, and condemns capitalism while milking it for a handsome profit. As publisher of the Beat poets, founder of the City Lights bookstore, and one of the gurus (along with pal Allen Ginsberg) to the radicals of the Vietnam period, Ferlinghetti has tried to build himself a reputation as a social and political visionary, but about all he has achieved is a shocking of the tender-minded and a titillation of political innocents. Having lost much of his audience as the nation recovered from its Vietnam spasms, he is now just another awfully Old Angry Young Man, like Mailer and Leslie Fiedler.

Larry Smith's book attempts to be both a biography and a reading of Ferlinghetti's poetry. Since he doesn't have much to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

work with, Smith valiantly tries to fashion the proverbial silk purse: he aims at criticism and ends up writing hagiography. Smith takes Ferlinghetti seriously in his self-anointed roles as idealist, prophet, conscience of America, "the open and public realist daring to speak our common truth." In reality, Ferlinghetti has been the literary mouthpiece for every radical cause imaginable; he vilified President Eisenhower, deified Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro, and found his political gods in Herbert Marcuse and Eldridge Cleaver. He is hardly, as Smith prefers to see him, the "rare combination of literary catalyst, populist spokesman, and creative craftsman" or "a poet-prophet of the contemporary world . . . the contemporary embodiment of the committed artist."

Ferlinghetti may well consider himself the voice of the people and thus of God, but this may be a case of what General Sherman once described as "Vox populi, vox humbug." He views the United States as thoroughly corrupt, diseased by capitalism, riddled with rotten institutions, an international bully that represses its own people and those of the whole world. The world "rolls on lousy with fascism/ The jails groan with it/ and governments groan with it/ And whenever there's a flag with red in it/ the people holding it up/ groan with it." This kind of poetry reminds us of Cicero's observation that "Men who have no inner resources for a good and happy life find every age burdensome."

Writers who use their names and reputations to proselyte for questionable causes really achieve nothing more than self-advertising. Perceptive readers are always suspicious that such writers are less concerned about the poor, the oppressed, and the unfortunate than about press clippings, expense-account living on the college lecture-and-reading circuit, and adulation by the media, the academics, and sophomore humanities majors. After all, it is very possible these days to make a comfortable living by being a professional conscience. As Romain Gary said not so many years ago, "There are many ways of becoming a professional beauty . . . and one of them is to write noble books, to take inspired, humanistic positions on all the right causes, keep signing those manifestoes."

Auden went through a period of being the professional beauty and the signer of manifestos, but he outgrew his artistic adolescence to become a significant poet of his time. Ferlinghetti, however, never put away his toys, and, as Liv Ullman said of George McGovern a decade ago, "the words just keep coming and coming as if he hopes that a little life and truth will sneak through." □

Self-Indulgence Made Simple

Peter Clecak: *America's Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfillment in the 60s and 70s;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Lee Congdon

This starry-eyed reappraisal of two unhappy decades in our nation's history serves as a sobering reminder that "the revolt of the masses" is far from over. Its author, deaf to any appeal to duty or civility, is an unabashed apologist for "postdeprivational," appetitive, man. Indeed, insofar as I am able to tell, there is almost no conceivable indulgence, no selfish whim, that does not strike Peter Clecak as, "on the whole, salutary." The conviction that human beings ought, for reasons that transcend the self, to practice restraint and even self-denial is as incomprehensible to him as it undoubtedly is to the surfers and "recreational" drug users who, one imagines, flock to his lectures at the University of California, Irvine. Nor will Clecak assign pride of place to any particular desire, for with Plato's "democratic man" he declares "that one appetite is as good as another and all must have their equal rights." This is hedonistic egalitarianism with a vengeance.

Not surprisingly, Clecak is impatient with those contemporary American Cassandras who have warned their countrymen about the perils of unbridled selfishness and open contempt for every form of authority. In his view, such prophets of doom fail to understand that because all standards are relative, one man's selfishness is another's quest for personal fulfillment. Refusing to make any concession to his opponents, he insists that "there was not enough selfishness and not nearly enough genuine concern with the self in the sixties and seventies."

In view of his cavalier handling of empirical evidence, Clecak need not have informed us that he is "no great admirer of authority," the exercise of which can only limit personal gratification and delay the breaking down of all remaining hierarchies. But there is more to it than that. Not only does he resent political and social authority, he denies the possibility of authoritative, nonarbitrary judgments of any sort. Who, he asks rhetorically, is to say that Doctorow is inferior to Hemingway or Faulkner? Who is in a position to judge whether or not mediocrity and vulgarity are on the rise? And if, perchance, they are, so what? The deliberate cultivation of vulgarity can be a means to democratic ends. "A suspension of manners, an all-around lowering of taste, a corruption of language can serve to include larger numbers of people in widening circles of social acceptability." Thus it is not, as Ortega y Gasset observed, "that the vulgar believes itself superexcellent and not vulgar, but that the vulgar proclaims and imposes the rights of vulgarity, or vulgarity as a right."

Having carried the egalitarian idea to lunatic lengths, Clecak concedes that he is isolated intellectually, at odds with

---

Dr. Congdon's latest book is The Young Lukács *(University of North Carolina Press).*

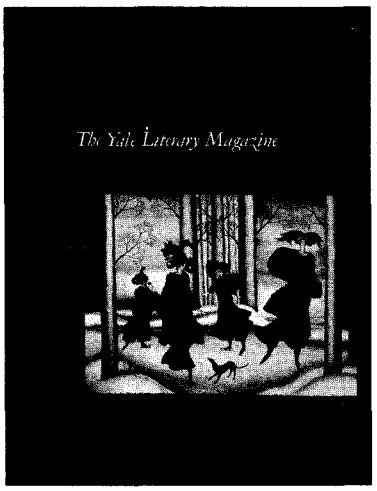
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The center of a literary and political squall."

— The New York Times

"An extraordinarily readable journal of ideas."

— Fortune



Oleg Prokofiev on his father's music • A. L. Rowse on Edmund Wilson • Leonid Pasternak on the Pasternak family • The diaries of Roy Fuller • Malcolm Cormack on the art of George Stubbs • E. M. Cioran on himself • Lewis H. Lapham on knowledge • Rosalyn Tureck on Bach • Mark Girouard on Victorian mansions • Richard Brookhiser on the art of Igor Galanin • Peter Witonski discovering the writings of Bruno Schulz • William F. Buckley, Jr. on our fading schools • A story by Andrei Platonov • Jean MacVean uncovering the poetry of Thomas Blackburn • I. E. Ouvaroff on the fable of Marc Chagall • Bryan Griffin on the Philistines • Otto J. Scott on servility • Martin Seymour-Smith on England • Curtis Cate on the follies of Walter Lippmann • A. L. Rowse on Cosgrave's Dublin • Lev Navrozov exposing the *New York Review of Books* • Richard Brookhiser scolding the *Nation* • Lev Navrozov exposing the *New York Times* • John Chamberlain reminiscing about journalism • A novella by Mircea Eliade • George Gilder on money and freedom • Roy Strong on Nicholas Hilliard and the English miniature • The letters of Arthur Schnitzler • I. E. Ouvaroff on the paintings of William Bailey • A forgotten play by Eugene Schwarz • J. Jean Aberbach on his friendship with Fernando Botero • Uwe Siemon-Netto on the fall of Europe • Sir Ernst Gombrich on Franz Schubert and the Vienna of his time • Lewis H. Lapham on ignorance • Annie Dillard on faith • Ezra Pound on music • Vasily Rozanov on himself • Thomas Molnar on Jean-Paul Sartre • I. E. Ouvaroff on Will Barnet • Gordon Craig's Paris Diary • Boris Goldovsky on opera • William French on Pound's Hemingway connection • Luigi Barzini on the British • Homage to Elie Nadelman • Curtis Cate on Le Corbusier • Raël Jean and Erich Isaac on the utopian think tanks • Also Philip Larkin, W. Nelson-Cave, Charles Causley, Charles Edward Eaton, Joseph Brodsky, Douglas Dunn, Hamish Guthrie, J. C. Hall, John Heath-Stubbs, Leslie Norris, Anne Ridler, Rudolph Schirmer, Michael Schmidt, Tarjei Vesaas, Christopher Fry, Eugene Dubnov, Richard Eberhart.

When *The Yale Literary Magazine* was founded, Beethoven was completing the *Missa Solemnis*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* appeared, and Emerson began his *Journal*. The names of a few authors we have published since then — Rudyard Kipling, Sinclair Lewis, Stephen Vincent Benét, Thornton Wilder, John Dos Passos — show that some of our judgments have been quite timely.

Today, as ever, it is unique talent, not just prominent names, that we seek. When we publish Lewis H. Lapham, or E. H. Gombrich, it is not because one is the editor of *Harper's* and the other a highbrow "name"; what they contribute to our pages is unique, and that is the reason for their inclusion. The same is true of all our authors.

The Yale Literary Magazine still stands alone.

Our magazine is not published fortnightly on newsprint, to extol this week's writers, expound on last week's thinkers, and crumble to dust a week thereafter. The paper we print on permits the most accurate color reproduction of any magazine in the world and is guaranteed to endure for centuries. And we seek to publish and reproduce what will last at least as long.

But *The Yale Literary Magazine* is now under attack.

So boldly, so uncomprisingly have our authors spoken on issues of culture and politics that the academic tastemakers of the university in whose shadow the magazine was born have sought to suppress it as a source of intellectual dissent. Their actions, as George Will remarked in a recent **60 Minutes** broadcast dealing with the controversy, have cast doubt on "the integrity of a major American university," and compelled the magazine to defend its freedom in court.

Our freedom endures, and *The Yale Literary Magazine* remains as independent, as passionate, as controversial as when it first addressed the nation. In the words of reviewers, it is "elegantly produced" (**The Washington Post**) "in the fine book tradition" (**Folio**), "sophisticated" (**American Spectator**), "impressive" (**Los Angeles Times**), "highbrow" (**Time**). "This spendid journal" (**Anthony Harrigan**), "strikingly handsome" (**Chronicle of Higher Education**), "downright lovely to look at" (**James J. Kilpatrick**), is also "good, mean fun" (**Los Angeles Times**). In short, *The Yale Literary Magazine* is "an organ of the *intelligent* intelligentsia" (**Eugene V. Rostow**).

Join us, and see for yourself why "*The Yale Literary Magazine* is one of the few magazines now being published in the United States that attempts a serious encounter with literature, with thought, with ideas."*

The Yale Literary Magazine

Since 1821

The Yale Literary Magazine is a publication of American Literary Society, Inc., a non-profit organization. *Lewis H. Lapham

Order Form: Introductory Rates

☐ I wish to subscribe for ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 year(s) at $24 a year ☐ Check box if this is a gift.

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

☐ My check for $ _____ is enclosed ☐ Bill me

Checks are payable to:
The Yale Literary Magazine
Box 243-A Yale Station
New Haven, Ct. 06520

Please charge my ☐VISA ☐MC ☐AMEX
Card # _____
Expiration Date:
For faster service call (203) 624-8400. D 4

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Spenglerian, or, as he prefers to call it, the nostalgic, mood that informs so much of recent cultural criticism. Yet he is so recklessly self-assured that he does not hesitate to take on all comers, singling out conservatives and neoconservatives for especial censure. He devotes many pages, for example, to an elucidation and critique of the writings of Philip Rieff and Daniel Bell, not having given prior thought to the fact that his faithful recreation of the latter's sensible arguments in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* and *The Winding Passage* only serves to underscore the fatuity of his own apology for infantilism.

But Clecak is almost as hard on the left as he is on the right. Because radical critics look back wistfully to the 60's, he upbraids them for having refused to abandon utopian demands and expectations and for having withdrawn from the arena of daily struggle. Blinded by bitter disappointment, they do not seem to notice that many of their more temperate demands have won wide societal acceptance. This excessive pessimism is somewhat less characteristic of left-liberal critics, for whom Clecak expresses an affinity, yet they too have succumbed to nostalgia, a longing for a time when their views defined the perimeters of public discourse. Ultimately, as Clecak sees it, their nostalgia derives from the contradiction between their plebeian sympathies and their patrician lives. Committed to political and economic democracy, they remain culturally conservative—even snobbish—and hence alienated from those whose well-being they claim to have at heart. Their disdain for the increasingly vocal cultural preferences of the unsophisticated is particularly evident, according to Clecak, in Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism.*

Against the present Spenglerian grain, Clecak argues that the immediate past should encourage optimism. During the 60's and 70's, the nation witnessed great egalitarian advances, particularly with respect to the twin elements of personal fulfillment—"salvation" and "a piece of social justice." In a chapter entitled "The Shapes of Salvation," Clecak bestows his benediction on virtually every redemptive nostrum of recent vintage. Although he has some reservations about "The Movement" of the 60's—its political utopianism above all—he applauds its cultural radicalism, the impetus it gave to the democratization of taste and conduct. At the same time, he praises the "Christian revival" because it too offered salvation—in the form of subjective contentment—to millions of Americans. He himself belongs to an unspecified "liberal branch" of the Christian church, but unlike so many of his "elitist" friends on the left, he does not disparage less-sophisticated expressions of religious experience, even those associated with Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell. And for those who do not find salvation in *Mother Jones* or *The Late Great Planet Earth,* there is always the primal scream, holistic running, or vegetarianism. Impressed by the likes of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, Clecak places himself foursquare behind the "human potential movement," and hence any and every therapeutic idiocy that promises to "free" the self from such depressing thoughts as sin, guilt, and judgment.

Turning his attention to "social justice," Clecak is somewhat less sanguine, in part because political, economic, and social democracy have advanced less rapidly than he would have liked. Still, thanks to dissent, almost every instance of which he defends, the past two decades did produce sufficient progress to secure the foundations for cultural equality. Because they were willing—I should say eager—to "make a scene," blacks, women, homosexuals, the handicapped, and the aged discovered and won new rights and entitlements. Even the fat, the ugly, and the short began to organize, and if

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

1984

"*1984* is a wonderful . . . book. Every twist and turn in it is a warning, heightened imaginatively, of the horrors of communist society. Orwell's special horror, the intellectual key necessary to make the whole thing work, was doublethink . . . to hold two totally contradictory thoughts in one's head at the same time. To know that they are contradictory, and yet not know. To say things one does not believe, and yet to hypnotize oneself into thinking that one does believe them . . . . Where I encounter doublethink regularly is in the West, where large numbers of the intellectual . . . classes . . . routinely give themselves over to monstrosities of doublethink."

—from the Comment by Richard Grenier

Also:

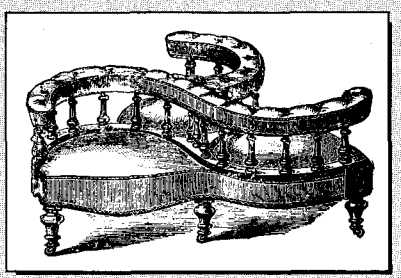
Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Perceptibles—Waste of Money
The American Proscenium—Screen—Art—Music
Correspondence—Liberal Culture—Journalism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIBERAL CULTURE

Heresy

There's major schismatic rumbling on the behavioral left. New York's *Village Voice*—the unholy scroll of the pansexual movement, the rock from which the faith of unbounded hetero-and-homo fornication was proclaimed *urbi et orbi* decades ago, the demi-intellectual volcano that buried Cartesian *Cogito Ergo Sum* (I think therefore I am) under the hot lava of multiple mass orgasms (flowing from the assembly lines of Manhattan single bars) and in its stead established the New Principle *Copulo Ergo Sum* (I copulate therefore I am)—has finally admitted a "hard truth":



the romance of sexual liberation . . . [that] sexual action could be limitless and without bad consequences [was] faulty all along . . . Doctors knew it . . . but the rest of us didn't focus.

Reformation? □

Clecak is right, we have not heard the last of Uglies Unlimited and the National Association to Aid Fat Persons, to say nothing of unions of short people who no longer suffer prejudicial "heightism" in silence.

There is, however, trouble in paradise. In 1980, the people, whose every wish Clecak endorses, elected Ronald Reagan as their President. In his "Epilogue," therefore, our author decided to set aside his live-and-let-live attitude in order to deliver an impassioned attack on the President and his advisers, all of whom, we are informed, are "uncaring, cold-hearted men" bent on serving the rich, oppressing the poor, and, damn it all, impeding the quest for personal fulfillment. Even under these trying circumstances, however, Clecak has not lost heart. Barring a nuclear war, which would spoil everything, he is convinced that many of the most important gains of the 60's and 70's "will be preserved and extended . . . in the eighties and nineties."

Although I have not been able to resist the temptation to have some fun with this book, I believe that it should be taken seriously. Clecak is undoubtedly right to point to the historical unity of the 60's and 70's, for many of the political, economic, and social demands made during the former decade were in fact met during the latter, as often as not by virtue of a Supreme Court decision. And if today there are few radicals in the streets, there are many in positions of power and influence; one of them, Senator Hart, would like to be our next President. Most important perhaps, issues that were once the property of extremists, are now taken up with enthusiasm by substantial numbers of respectable Americans, particularly those who hold college degrees. Consider, for example, the widespread support in middle- and upper-middle-class circles for pacifism, the proliferation of "rights," homosexual "liberation," and grammatical relativism.

Culturally, of course, the consequences of our increasing immaturity as a people have been disastrous. Perhaps Hilton Kramer has put the case as well as anyone. He wrote in the first number of *The New Criterion:*

> We are still living in the aftermath of the insidious assault on mind that was one of the most repulsive features of the radical movement of the Sixties. The cultural consequences of this leftward turn in our political life have been far graver than is commonly supposed. In everything from the writing of textbooks to the reviewing of trade books, from the introduction of kitsch into the museums to the decline of literacy in the schools to the corruption of scholarly research, the effect on the life of culture has been ongoing and catastrophic.

The publication of Clecak's book is surely a case in point. This celebration of barbarism, indiscipline, and hedonism bears the imprimatur of Oxford University Press, once a proud name in publishing.

I wish finally to consider a potentially more dangerous consequence of cultural egalitarianism—the decline of mass taste. Those who were born before 1945 will, as I do, remember radio shows such as *Amos and Andy, Jack Benny, Suspense, The Life of Riley,* and *Fibber Magee and Molly.* These shows were not, of course, the stuff of high culture, but they were, in their own way, worthwhile—witty, well written, and entertaining. Certainly they were never debasing. One has only to compare such shows as these with current television programs such as *Three's Company* and *Dynasty* to get some sense of just how far we have sunk. Or think of the popular music of the 30's and 40's, the work of Cole Porter, George Gershwin, Johnny Mercer, and Rodgers and Hart. Few of our young people would even recognize these names and most will die believing that John Lennon was a great songwriter. As far as the movies are concerned, the less said the better. Most of the great directors and actors are gone now and we are left with films that contrive to be as morally repugnant as they are aesthetically void.

All in all, it is not difficult to understand why the Spenglerian metaphor of decline continues to haunt civilized Americans. One need not accept the inevitability of degeneration that Spengler

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proposed in order to be alive to the dangers he described. There are, to be sure, some signs of hope, but I do not believe that I am alone in thinking that our time may be running out. No civilization that gives itself up to the limitless hedonism that Clecak extols can long endure. It was Ortega y Gasset who pointed out that the benefits of civilization do not fall from the sky; they are secured by means of sacrifice and effort. I would only add that the maintenance of civilized life is impossible without a citizenry that recognizes the importance of discipline, discrimination, and a sense of community. That being the case, books such as this one, which pander to the worst in us, can only hasten our ruin. □

One Way Out

Walker Percy: *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

> So too it may be useful to write a novel about the end of the world. Perhaps it is only through the conjuring up of catastrophe, the destruction of all Exxon signs, and the sprouting of vines in the church pews, that the novelist can make vicarious use of catastrophe in order that he and his readers may come to themselves.
>
> —*The Message in the Bottle*

Although *Lost in the Cosmos* is not a novel in the sense that Walker Percy's earlier *Love in the Ruins* is, both conjure up catastrophe. (*Lost in the Cosmos* is, however, a fiction, both in terms of its invented persona and its structure.) In all his work Percy has been concerned with eschatology. More than any major writer of his time, he has been haunted by an intuition of the end of things as we know them. That sensibility has led him to conjure up visions of catastrophe in the hope of teaching a lesson. Instead of this concern leading to suicide, the option with which some of his characters have been greatly preoccupied, it has made Percy a novelist-prophet, "one of the few remaining witnesses to the doctrines of original sin, the imminence of catastrophe in paradise."

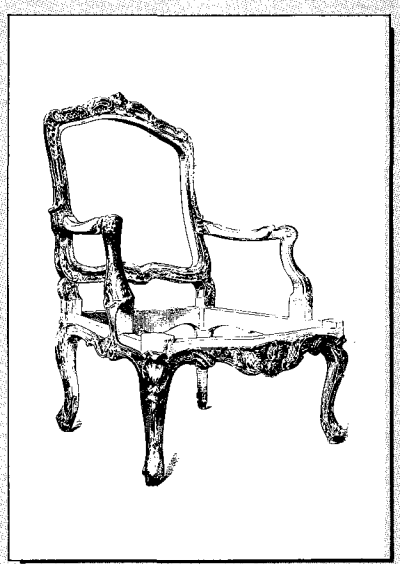
The novelist writes about the coming end in order to warn about present ills and so avert the end. Not being called by God to be a prophet, he nevertheless pretends to a certain prescience. . . . The novelist is less like a prophet than he is like the canary that coal miners used to take down into the shaft to test the air. When the canary gets unhappy, utters plaintive cries, and collapses, it may be time for the miners to surface and think things over.

Lost in the Cosmos is the "last" self-help book: run, do not walk, to the nearest exit. The last war will soon begin, readers are warned. War, for Percy, is a fit symbol of both the inner and outer chaos caused and experienced by the self-destructive creature that triadic man has become. Having willfully disinherited himself, he is a ghost haunting the cosmos. Percy's book is about "The Strange Case of the Self"—the self in its relationship with itself, with others (the cosmos), and, ultimately, with God. The most exciting formal aspect of this work is its unique structure. Two comparisons may be of help. The first is with Jacques Maritain's *The Peasant of the Garrone,* a series of reflections on the nature of the present time from a philosophical perspective much like Percy's.

> I [Maritain] said once to Jean Cocteau: We must have a tough mind and a tender heart, adding with a certain melancholy that the world is full of

Dr. Schwartz is editor of Renascence.

LIBERAL CULTURE



Veracities

Well, if one thinks about it, it seems that New York has invented a whole new industry of thrills and pastimes for "enlightened" liberal audiences. Not long ago, a "crowd of 2000," according to *The Militant,* the organ of the rabid left, went into ecstasy at Hunter College, where Caribbean communists, headed by former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, produced a *reggae* festival of political sadomasochism. One of the speakers promulgated:

> Revolution is the last means through which a people can achieve freedom, democracy, and self-determination.

And the audience wallowed in the bliss of being most brutally lied to. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dried up hearts and flabby minds.

Maritain's persona is a cranky peasant, a man who puts his foot in his mouth (Baudelaire), one who calls a spade a spade. He has a distinct identity of his own as he speaks the philosophy of Maritain. Percy's persona is not a cranky peasant but a 20th-century American who has survived his immersion in popular culture and comes back, staggering a bit, from the experience to distance himself from it, though using it to conjure up a picture of chaos. Whereas Maritain questions himself about his time, Percy's persona is concerned with the notion of the self. He stands aloof and is more impersonal, is a crafty constructor of leading questions. The second comparison is with Percy's own *The Message in the Bottle* (1975), though this book is not a fiction but a collection of expository essays.

The self-help book has a special place in 20th-century cultural history. The very concept of a self-help book grows out of the most tyrannizing image of modernism: the self as the center of reality—the real being authenticated by the self rather than the other way around. Help must be sought only from the self. God, of course, is dead. Others are reduced to minor roles in the self's drama of self-authentication. Each human being must authenticate reality, his own reality. Percy's is the *last* self-help book because time has run out. Ideological bankruptcy is the final result of self-worship. "Two gods in the cosmos is one god too many." Most obvious and ironical is that the precious, worshiped self, so nurtured and coddled, has been lost, though Percy's Crowd Pleaser claims that we have one more chance.

Percy's structure is a combination of "Twenty Questions" (20 chapters), television game shows, and those quiz-questionnaires found in magazines and Sunday supplements which promise to reveal self-knowledge. A "Thought Experience" usually ends each section. Scenes, televisionlike playlets, are scattered throughout, the most memorable being "The Last Phil Donahue Show." Chapters 19 and 20, two brief space odysseys, take the form of short narratives about the end of the world. There is also an "intermezzo" of 40 pages on semiotics in which Percy explains man's (the sign-user's) necessary placement in the world through "an elementary semiotical grounding of the theory of the self taken for granted in these pages."

> "I found [Percy's] mishmash of satire and seriousness totally confusing . . . . it thrust me into the worst form of despair I know—boredom."
>
> **—Francine du Plessix Gray**
> ***New York Times Book Review***
>
> *"Lost in the Cosmos* seethes with a sort of hamfisted bitterness . . . . the book reduces itself to snippets of elephantine playfulness . . . . he chooses to dispense cheap thrills."
>
> **—Geoffrey Stokes**
> ***Village Voice***
>
> "a trifle strained . . . a self-indulgent fancy."
>
> **—Peter Clecak**
> ***Commonweal***
>
> "Percy will strike you as barking, eloquently and with impressive originality, up the wrong tree . . . . [I] finally tuned out."
>
> **—Jack Beatty**
> ***The New Republic***

The great danger in using a combination of debased forms for a book is that they are so trivial in themselves that their use could lead easily to a trivializing of the material they enclose. It would appear that these debased forms have been abused beyond any further use for serious satire, but Percy's skill is more than sufficient.

The view of man which undergirds *Lost in the Cosmos* is expressed succinctly in *The Message in the Bottle:*

> It was something men lived by, even when they fell short of it and saw themselves as sinners. It was the belief that man was created in the image of God with an immortal soul, that he occupied a place in nature somewhere between the beasts and the angels, that he suffered an aboriginal catastrophe, the Fall, in consequence of which he lost his way and, unlike beasts, became capable of sin and thereafter became a pilgrim or seeker of his own salvation, and that the clue and sign of his salvation was to be found not in science or philosophy but in news of an actual historical event involving a people [the Jews], a person [Christ], and an institution [the Roman Catholic Church].

The implications of this passage and its consequences are in everything Percy has written. To ignore that is to miss the essence of his work. This view of man has, for the most part, been lost. Instead of the self as pilgrim we have instead the amnesiac self that gives us license to enter a new life and leave the old one behind without guilt, the fearful self hiding its vacancy under the mask it shows to the world, the sexually promiscuous self which has lost its way and serves Satan instead of God. Since the view of our time is that the self (as confused as we are about it) is the compelling image of reality, the object about which the universe (if it exists) is organized, it has finally only two mutually exclusive choices: transcendence or immanence.

Immanence (bestiality) is the option for the materialist. Believing it, one has his feet on the ground; there is no nonsense about the supernatural. Within its perimeters, it works well enough; if it does not promise more than it can deliver, it is often accurate in its forecasts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Naturally, it became scientism since even a lost self will not be without a god, prepared as it is by its loss of belief in God to believe then in anything else. The immanent posture has had immense problems as a result, especially since it developed its own philosophy—positivism. Only the most stoic of such believers appears to have any poise now; even the most dimwitted suspect that something has gone wrong. Sex, the principal recreation of the immanent, has lost its kick. Cole Porter, alas, was wrong: I don't get a kick out of you; cocaine is better. Transcendence (angelism) is the option of the elite few, especially writers, a few philosophers, and selected scientists. The gnostic type, the ultimate romantic, is sustained for a time by the radiance of his pure vision and congratulates himself on his clear perception of the unbridgeable gap between the way things are and the way they ought to be. From staring so steadfastly into the sun, however, the Bombay saint goes blind and no longer sees the "opulent bric-a-brac earth." (In Richard Wilbur's "On the Eyes of the SS Officer" the distance between the "visionary" SS officer and the "visionary" Bombay saint is much less than one might think.) The transcendent self dies of thirst at the fountainside; "a world without objects is a sensible emptiness." There are various means of reentry into the quotidian for him, but none work without God. Without reentering he will never discover the sacred in the profane.

In the two space odysseys that end the book the myth of reentry is the chief idea considered. Our madness for space, both Percy and Saul Bellow agree, is a sign of our self-loathing despair. But we must come "back" somehow. When those in the spaceship communicate with another planet on which prelapserian culture still exists, they are refused the right to land because they do not have satisfactory answers for the three great questions, the central questions of *Lost in the Cosmos:*

Have you requested help?
Did it arrive?
Did you accept it?

These questions exist within and outside of history. They contain the secret for discovering the sacred in the profane. They bridge the gap between transcendent and immanent. Their answers remain to be discovered (or rediscovered) by those who have lost touch with the world. The character in the space odyssey who symbolizes that "lost" world and its meaning is Abbot Liebowitz.

In most of his fiction, Percy has used the deus ex machina, a most unfashionable literary technique. In Greek plays it was a device by which the gods were brought into the lives of men. The plot was so complicated or unyielding that only a god could untangle the skein of events. I find the idea utterly charming, quite true for many of the dramas played out by men. It is only the modern and postmodern sensibilities that could somehow conceive of men themselves as writing the last act of their lives. In Percy's fiction the deus ex machina is used for its godlike quality: Val and Fr. Boomer in *The Last Gentleman,* Percival in *Lancelot,* Fr. Smith in *Love in the Ruins,* and Fr. Weatherbee in *The Second Coming.* Abbot Liebowitz is a member of that select group. He asked for help; help arrived; most important of all, he accepted it. He is, in turn, now the helper of others. The source and figure of supernatural help is always present—the intersection of time and timelessness, the still point of the turning world. He has arrived and waits for us to accept Him. We are, says Percy, the triadic creatures for whom a new law of the cosmos had to be written, just for us and because of our aboriginal catastrophe: We need help and help is available.

There has to be a good deal of merit in a book that tells the reader: "you are depressed because you have every reason to be depressed." That aspect of Percy is very attractive indeed, but it is only one aspect and, taken alone, it can be misleading. It has caused a number of readers and critics to miss the point of his writing. In the same way his charm, his whimsy, his skillful use of irony have inadvertently influenced a number of readers to miss the profundity of his theme. Percy is, however, one of our most interesting writers precisely because he has the gift of prescience and the capacity for weighty truth-telling—something earned out of an agony of spirit at which we can only guess. He gives his reader for a brief time an insight into what the world is all about. □

A Flounder and the Shark

Adam B. Ulam: *Dangerous Relations: The Soviet Union in World Politics, 1970-1982;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Henry L. Mason III

Vladimir Bukovsky remarked that without a guide through the "labyrinths of the Soviet soul," studies of socialism "are simply useless—or worse, they make the subject even more obscure." Were it not for the fact that Adam Ulam has been interpreting the Soviet Union since long before Bukovsky made his comment, one could suspect that Ulam wrote *Dangerous Relations* to prove Bukovsky right. It is surprising that the Director of Harvard's Russian Research Center could pay so little attention to how the Bolshevik leaders explain their conduct both to themselves and to the world at large, but then intellectual idiosyncracy appears to be Ulam's trademark.

Dangerous Relations reflects Ulam's long-standing misperception that Marxism-Leninism has nothing to do with Bolshevik behavior. As Ulam conceives it,

Mr. Mason practices law in Chicago.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

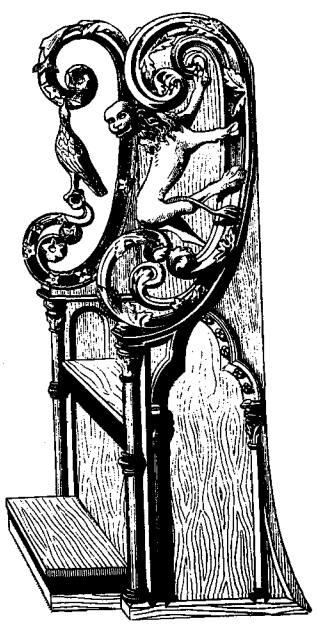
the real problem in Soviet-American affairs is the clash between "the moralistic and legalistic strain of the American approach to foreign relations" and Soviet fondness for "old-fashioned" concepts such as "spheres of influence." Ideological "incantations" are therefore irrelevant, and the billions of words the Bolsheviks have uttered on the subject are apparently to be considered nothing more than reflections of an elaborate Russian plot.

The error in Ulam's notion can be symbolized in a single word: grain. Year after year the failures of Soviet agriculture bring the country to the verge of wide-scale famine and require the diversion of vast quantities of hard currency. The Soviet leaders know perfectly well how to reduce these payments (which in the Bolshevik view could be much better devoted to buying military hardware or foreign technology), since they can hardly avoid noticing that minuscule private plots produce a vastly disproportionate quantity of food ("In this area government trade is markedly inferior to that of the private entrepreneur," *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda,* May 17, 1983, p.2). Yet private production is discouraged and harassed, and *Kommunist* shrilly denounces anyone who makes bold to suggest the slightest accommodation to individual initiative in the interest of feeding the population. The obvious explanation is that the communist leaders are so besotted by ideological fanaticism that it is not Marxist-Leninist theory that they deem irrelevant, but the actual performance of their socialist system.

There is no reason why the same ideological motivations should not apply with equal force in the field of foreign policy, particularly in light of the Bolshevik insistence on the "indissoluble interconnection between the foreign and domestic policy of the socialist state" (A. Gromyko, "V. I. Lenin and the Foreign Policy of the Soviet State," *Kommunist,* No. 6, April 1983, p. 16) and the consistent Soviet view that "the art of Bolshevik leadership requires a knowledge of [Marxist-Leninist] theory" *(On the Organization of Party Propaganda in Connection with the Publication of the History of the C.P.S.U.(B) Short Course,* p. 12, Moscow, 1939). And so, when Andrei Gromyko writes that "Leninist descriptions of the basic divisions of imperialism . . . even now help us work out differentiated policies with respect to such capitalist countries as the USA, West Germany, England, France, Italy, Japan and others" *(Kommunist,* No. 6, supra, p. 12), there is not the slightest reason why we shouldn't believe him. As Donald Zagoria put it in *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961* (Princeton, 1962):

> Ideology and reality have become so interconnected in the Communist mind, it seems, that discussions about reality are never free from ideological assumptions and terminology.

Ulam, however, chooses to disregard all of this. Because he considers Marxist-Leninist ideology irrelevant, he cannot possibly explain either the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (which is, of course, the political incarnation of Marxism-Leninism), or the nature of the Soviet state (which is nothing more than an administrative arm of the Communist Party). It is therefore hardly surprising that he makes a hash of Soviet foreign policy.



"The worth of Ulam's criticism is undeniable."
—The New Republic

"[*Dangerous Relations* is] a welcome treatment of Soviet foreign policy . . . . Mr. Ulam's superbly knowledgeable reconstruction of events . . . . provides a plausible and readable account . . . . even where the book is a bit frustrating, it is always stimulating."
—New York Times Book Review

Thus, *Dangerous Relations* continues to mirror Ulam's previous appraisal of the Communist Party (*The Rivals)* as nothing more than a Russian version of the Moral Rearmament movement:

> In the face of . . . Americanization, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since the 1930's had propagated and enforced an essentially traditionalist system of values and morals. . . . Except for the socialist label and the discouragement of religion, there was little in the required morals and motivations that a Victorian businessman with no democratic sympathies could have objected to in Stalin's Russia.

Interpretative subjectivism on such a scale tends to leave the reader breathless, but one suspects that even without democratic "sympathies" a Victorian businessman might have objected to the obscene revels with which the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934 ("The Congress of the Victors") celebrated the "successes" of the Party's civil war against millions of enterprising and hardworking peasants ("the liquidation of the kulaks as a class"). He might also have found something repellent in the Great Terror (which swept away more than half the participants at the Congress of the Victors), the vast apparatus of spies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and informers (including their use to further what Robert Conquest accurately called the "conscious Stalinist aim" of producing "disintegration of family loyalty"), the Purge Trials, the gulag, the Hitler-Stalin pact, the recurrent campaigns against Jews as disloyal "rootless cosmopolitans," the promulgation of virulent class hatred which continues with unabated fury to the present day, and the oppression or annexation of the Soviet Union's neighboring states. He might also find it curious that Ulam talks about a "system of values and morals" in connection with a gang of political thugs whose ethical views were and are expressed by the succinct rhetorical question: *Partii eto nado, prichem sdes 'moral'?* (The Party needs it, so why bring ethics in?).

Similarly, Ulam speaks of the Soviet government as if it were an independent instrumentality with its own goals and "national interests." In fact, no one has ever successfully contended that the Soviet state is anything more than a puppet of the Communist Party; by treating it as if it were like other governments—however authoritarian—Ulam has committed the political equivalent of trying to describe a shark by referring only to its dorsal fin.

The result is a consistent misinterpretation. Ulam tells us that during the period immediately following World War II (i.e., the era of the Berlin Blockade and the Korean War, among other things), "far from being ready to set on a course of conquering the world for Communism, the U.S.S.R. badly wanted and needed peace." We are also solemnly informed, on the basis of a citation to a single Soviet source and in the teeth of considerable evidence to the contrary, that from 1974 onward the U.S.S.R. was trying to instill "respectability and moderation" in the Palestine Liberation Organization. And Ulam ultimately finds himself in the position of complaining helplessly that the "makers" of Soviet foreign policy are inexplicably "unable to emancipate themselves completely from some (to an outsider often irrational) dogmas." The dogmas, of course, are the very Marxist-Leninist postulates that Ulam has repeatedly pronounced irrelevant but from which the Soviet leaders have not the slightest desire to "emancipate themselves."

We are also presented with what can only be described as a highly misleading myth; in Ulam's view the U.S.S.R. did not, and presumably does not, "see itself as yet strong enough to be friendly with the democracies." So the problem, apparently, is not that Soviet ideology is implacably hostile to the bourgeois class, capitalist economy, and democratic political systems, but that the Bolsheviks are simply too stupid to realize their strength and too frightened to be "friendly." Perhaps if we offered to give back Alaska . . .

Anyone who wants to understand Soviet foreign policy would do better to ponder the comment of an émigré Soviet historian:

> Many people, particularly among Western historians, are inclined to view Soviet imperialism and Soviet foreign policy as an organic continuation of the imperialist policy of Czarist Russia. Other people, particularly among Russians themselves in the free world, are inclined to reject any connection between the two policies. Both views, which are perfectly explicable psychologically, are derived from subjective emotional perceptions. To identify the foreign policy of Imperial Russia with the foreign policy of Soviet Russia is to overestimate the capabilities, scale, character and purpose of Czarist foreign policy activity and to underestimate the . . . internationalist, intercontinental scale and ideocratic character of Soviet Communist imperialism. *The foreign policy interests of Czarist Russia were territorial and strategic and encompassed Eurasia; they were accordingly local. The interests of the U.S.S.R., on the other hand, are ideological, and are accordingly global.**

If American policymakers were to rely on Ulam's interpretations they would rapidly find, as the old Trotskyite metaphor puts it, that *Dangerous Relations* provides not a lifebelt, but a noose. □

*A. Avtorkhanov, *Sila i Bessiliye Brezhneva [Brezhnev's Strength and Impotence]*, (Frankfurt, 1980) p. 217 [emphasis added].

In the Mail

***The Presidential Nominating Process, Volume I* edited by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America/The White Burkett Miller Center; Washington, DC.** The best or the broadest?

***The Virginia Papers on the Presidency, Volume XII* edited by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America/The White Burkett Miller Center; Washington, DC.** The Presidency considered not as an object, a thing, but as a matter of individuals, fallible though they may be.

***The American Presidency: Principles and Problems, Volume II* edited by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America/The White Burkett Miller Center; Washington, DC.** Reminiscences, reflections, recommendations.

***The Book of Irish Verse: An Anthology of Irish Poetry from the Sixth Century to the Present* selected by John Montague; Macmillan; New York.** After centuries with a sting, it now tries to swing.

***100 Watts: The James Watt Memorial Cartoon Collection* edited by Carew Papritz; Khyber Press; Auburn, WA.** Dim-witted.

***Comeuppance* by James E. Siegel; Philosophical Library; New York.** Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden* passed through Whitman's greenhouse and irradiated by post-Einsteinian thought.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Give your favorite NON-LIBERAL a gift subscription to your favorite NON-LIBERAL journal of opinion.

Aha! The perfect gift for that friend who shares your outlook—and ought to be enjoying CHRONICLES OF CULTURE.

Here's your chance to provide a gift that engages, enrages, challenges, piques, posits, reviews, critiques, essays and observes—in a decidedly non-liberal manner.

The perfect match: your friend and the next 12 monthly issues of CHRONICLES OF CULTURE.

And we've made it easy. Simply send the coupon below, with your check for $18 (just $15 for the second gift subscription, $14 for the third). We'll not only start sending CHRONICLES OF CULTURE to your fortunate non-liberal friends, but alert them in advance that the subscription is on its way—as your gift from one non-liberal to another!

Chronicles of Culture

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION REQUEST

Please send a one-year, 12-issue subscription—and a card announcing my gift—to the non-liberal recipients listed below.

My check is enclosed for: Check One

$18 - one gift subscription ( )
$33 - two gift subscriptions ( )
$47 - three gift subscriptions ( )

First Recipient _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Second Recipient _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Third Recipient _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Gift Card to read:

From _____
(your name)

Send check and this request to:
Chronicles of Culture
934 North Main Street
Rockford, Illinois 61103

NCCGR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dark Contract

Matthew J. Bruccoli: *James Gould Cozzens: A Life Apart;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

by Ronald Berman

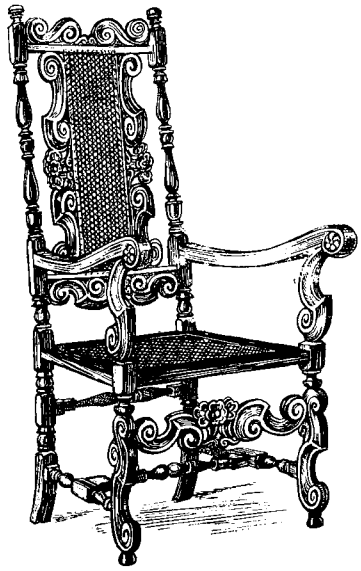
Matthew Bruccoli is, perhaps, the leading biographer of modern American novelists. With this book he scores something of a triple, as it appeared soon after his acclaimed lives of Fitzgerald and O'Hara. Like his other works, it is exceptionally well-produced. It is a handsome book, with a full apparatus of notes and documents.

There is a difference between biography plain and simple and a critical life. Bruccoli writes critical lives. This one not only evaluates the novels but debates the critics. Bruccoli's virtues are many and splendid: he writes clearly, honestly, and with great intelligence. He has a phenomenal grasp of the methods: interviewing, doing the archival work, risking interpretation of the life and its connection to the novels. Even the photographs are a joy. But his work is not quite at the level of those who—I am thinking of Richard Ellmann, the biographer of Joyce, and Carlos Baker, the biographer of Hemingway—have managed to join literary criticism itself to life study. Bruccoli knows how to summarize criticism, how to debate it, how to show whether it is fair. But he does not himself deploy it. His book on Fitzgerald, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur,* is first-rate, except that it says almost nothing of the work. Perhaps that should be put more precisely: the Fitzgerald book, like this book on Cozzens, does not interpret the text.

There are several kinds of trouble that James Gould Cozzens makes for readers. The first is that he does not like them. I do not mean by this that he was misanthropic, although he did lead a life literally apart from society. I mean that he did not like the regnant ideas of our time, the ideas by which we define ourselves. He had a Johnsonian sense of self and despised weakness, which he saw displayed in the universal, sentimental belief in our essential goodness. He loathed liberalism and he brought down upon himself its reaction to him. Here is a well-known contribution Cozzens once lightly made to a book about contemporary authors:

> My social preference is to be left alone, and people have always seemed willing, even eager to gratify my inclination. I am more or less illiberal, and strongly antipathetic to all political and artistic movements. I was brought up an Episcopalian, and where I live the landed gentry are Republican. I do not understand music, I am little interested in art, and the theatre seems tiresome to me. My literary preferences are for writers who take the trouble to write well. This necessarily excludes some of my most lauded contemporaries.

He was an ironic man and had a sense of humor, although perhaps not one of proportion. How much more wounding that paragraph is to the naked liberal than a dissertation on politics—it attacks what Cozzens disliked so intelligently, the whole web of "serious" culture. And what is left out—the almost obligatory oath of allegiance to the Social Duty of the Novelist—makes as many enemies as what is included. Cozzens never wrote his *For Whom the Bell Tolls.*



In a century of liberalism Cozzens was an unabashed conservative. Although he was in many ways like Edmund Wilson, he never tried to atone for his class or other advantages. Instead of trying to wash away his guilt he affirmed those values of the high middle class to which he belonged. His immersion in that class began when he was sent to Kent School, which seemed to have influenced him much more than his years at Harvard. But he fought Kent school as Joyce fought Clongowes Wood. Cozzens was very intelligent and alarmingly well-read. He saw himself in opposition to religious and moral authority; he made life hard on the masters. But he rebelled against the deficiencies of the high middle class before he defended its virtues.

It is important to note that Cozzens was both a conservative and rebel. And that he, like Pound, Hemingway, and countless others of his generation, went into exile. His exile took an outwardly uneventful form: at the age of 24, after writing several well-received novels, he married his literary agent, Sylvia Bernice Baumgarten. They were married for half an uneventful century, living always in some connection to but a long journey from New York. During this period (except for service in World War II) Cozzens lived in exurbia and wrote. His exile was like Faulkner's: living in communities that absorbed his attention, ignoring and despising the issues which agitated the café society of the mind.

This book and another Bruccoli pro-

Dr. Berman is with the department of literature at the University of California —San Diego.

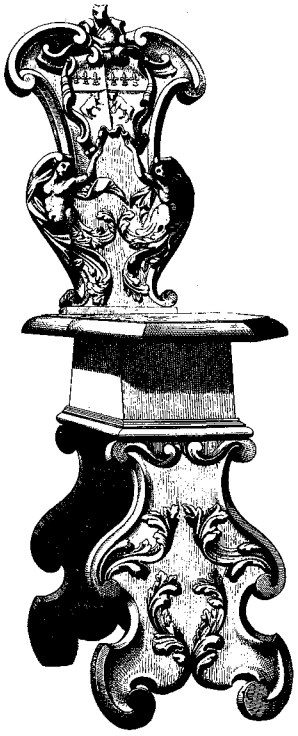
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

duction, *Just Representations: A James Gould Cozzens Reader,* indicate what Cozzens did when he seemed not to be doing anything. He observed life in courtrooms—which he attended—and restaurants, which he frequented. He selected his material from the flow around him. There are no bullfighters in Cozzens. Instead, he seems to create a social context which dates back to Jane Austen. Here is what Bruccoli says about character and setting in *By Love Possessed* and other novels:

> Because Cozzens insists on the hierarchical nature of society—a stratification based on character, ability, education, intelligence, and opportunity—he has been variously labeled a snob, an aristocrat, or a reactionary. Egalitarian-minded critics have objected to his equation of merit with breeding and education. (Cozzens never concerns himself with great wealth; his aristocracy is an upper-middle class aristocracy, in which vocation and character count more than money.) His admirable figures are men who have accepted the duties of their abilities and positions. They are what they do and how well they do it.

While I do agree, I don't know if "intelligence" is the proper term. The characters whom Cozzens embeds in moral predicaments are sometimes measurably less intelligent and even less imaginative than those they oppose. The Cozzens hero, unlike the 20th-century stereotype, is not a model of mind dominated by sensibility. The great set pieces of dialogue, like that between Arthur Winner and Julius Penrose about guilt and responsibility in *By Love Possessed,* indicate a kind of heroic innocence. It might be said that the Cozzens hero derives from the earlier period of the novel, for he is a figure like Rasselas or Emma, one who finds that experience is less intelligible than ideas.

The Cozzens antagonist tends to be an intellectual. Julius Penrose or a character like General Nichols in *Guard of Honor* seems at moments to become a kind of fictive Pure Thought. They move with distressing ease beyond moral obstacles which remain in the way of the other. They see everything. But they don't have *something,* some saving form of grim stupidity, that their students seem to have. It turns out that wars domestic



and foreign are won by a different kind of knowledge. It is no wonder that the critics hated Cozzens—not only does he actually want to win wars; he wants that to happen because we believe in them.

The question of belief for Cozzens himself is more than interesting. Bruccoli notes several times that as Cozzens aged he became ever more convinced that not to be born was better than to have lived. He did not say that life was tragic or that it should be improved or reformed: it was better not to be born. Yet Cozzens lived a life of success and even of happiness. In his middle years his work was taken, often, by the Book-of-the-Month Club. He made a good deal of money and lived well. In early life, when he did not sell, he was supported by a wife who was beautiful, intelligent, and devoted to him. It seems that life was kept away, in spite of these advantages, by writing, isolation, and drinking. And that Cozzens sincerely did believe that living was a kind of moral struggle.

Cozzens was not only affected by aging; even before sickness and false teeth and alcohol got to him he wrote, in 1964, "Demonstrably, the most dangerous thing anyone can ever do is to be born. You're making a contract, with no escape clause to die at the pleasure of the nature of things. Why do this?" The notebooks that Cozzens kept in the 1960's, and from which this passage was taken, are full of reflections on "the nature of things." Possibly there is some reason why a master of allusion should embed in his own lines those of Lucretius.

There are two passages that ought to be read in apposition. The first is from the notebooks, the second from a review of *By Love Possessed* by Irving Howe:

> It seems to be the simple perhaps sad fact that our human nature makes it apparently impossible for anyone to really love anyone else.

> It speaks to a society weary of ideals and dubious of hopes; it helps console people in their prosperous frustrations; it offers conservative wisdom in a moment of liberal twilight.

Howe added that Cozzens is a spokesman "for a civilization that finds its symbolic embodiment in Dwight David Eisenhower and its practical guide in John Foster Dulles." So much for the muses. But the minds of Eisenhower and Dulles consort oddly with what actually can be found in the novels. Throughout Cozzens's work there is something that extends the vision of conservatism and seems to elude that of liberalism. The life and the novels deal with an unwilling contract. As Cozzens sees it, life, or rather its relationships, must be created out of nothing. The remarkable thing about him then is that he was the *opposite* of confident, practical, and consoling. He may have been more like Kafka and Hemingway than like Eisenhower and Dulles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When Cozzens summed up certain beliefs in his notebooks, he went to the poet who said that he wrote clear verse about dark things. To read the life of Cozzens and his fiction is to recognize them:

> . . . when time's dominion shakes the body,
> When limbs react with dull ungainliness,
> Then the mind limps, tongue is a babbler, mind
> Is palsied, all is failure, all is loss.
> So spirit's quality must dissolve like smoke
> Into the air aloft.

There are different kinds of moral meanings. Cozzens disliked his contract, but he kept it. □

Making Hay with the Southern Sun

Walter Taylor: *Faulkner's Search for a South;* University of Illinois Press; Urbana.

Thomas Wolfe: *Welcome to Our City: A Play in Ten Scenes;* Edited by Richard S. Kennedy; Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.

by Clyde Wilson

Posthumously, William Faulkner has achieved a celebrity that, if we take him at his word, he despised and eschewed, but which seems inseparable from modern commercial culture. Every second man in the street, who can't remember who is currently Vice-President, recognizes Faulkner's name as that of a famous writer. Every lumpen intellectual who once read *The Sound and the Fury* in a sophomore lit class feels qualified to "explain" Faulkner. Worse, Faulkner has become an industry. His home can be toured, at certain times, for a fee. Minor literati who met him once at lunch in New York or Hollywood can, with but slight embroidery, sell their recollections to the Sunday supplements. An academic press that publishes a book with Faulkner in the title will probably break even on library sales alone. Faulkner supports a whole scholarly phalanx, and there are undoubtedly people around who have made more money explicating and analyzing him than *he* ever made creating works of genius. (Admittedly, it is also true that several great scholars, who are perhaps as rare as great writers, have devoted careers to him, in both Europe and America.)

When a cultural phenomenon becomes as large as William Faulkner, liberals must be equipped to orient themselves to it. They must know what liberalism is supposed to say about the phenomenon, a process not unlike the way adolescents learn about Jordache jeans and members of fraternal orders acquire passwords and intricate handshakes. This need has created an entire school of literary criticism, of which *Faulkner's Search for a South* is an example.

The easiest tactic would be simply to postulate that Faulkner was a liberal. Aren't all wise and good men? Walter Taylor has taken a more honest, difficult, and sophisticated path. He admits that, after all, Faulkner was not a liberal. He flunked the ultimate litmus test—his attitudes toward Southern history and the race question never quite coincided with the attitudes decreed by liberal convention. But since these are the only possible attitudes for wise and good men, their absence in Faulkner presents an interesting phenomenon for scholarly description and explanation. Faulkner failed to find the South described by liberal convention. It is inadmissible that he may not have been looking for it. Therefore, that he did not find it is an interesting "failure" to be accounted for.

Thus, the "failure" that Faulkner himself sometimes spoke about, which generally has been interpreted as a felt failure of artistic realization, has metamorphosed, for Taylor, into a "failure" to find the right South. He kept searching for it but could never quite find it, according to Taylor, because of his commitment to the condescending, paternalistic outlook that turn-of-the-century Mississippi "aristocrats" developed as a counterweight to the unabashed racism of the "poor whites." This commitment was all the more poignant and ambiguous because of Faulkner's family's dubious position within the "aristocracy." Taylor makes his case with considerable skill and enterprise. However, to too great a degree one has to be willing to be persuaded by speculative biographical evidence like the following:

> [T]he Faulkners *would never know* whether they were Cavaliers or rednecks, and not knowing would affect them profoundly. . . . For thirteen-year-old Bill Faulkner, trying to understand the family heritage *must have been* frustrating . . . . As Faulkner grew older, he *must have* grown increasingly aware that Vardaman's victory [over the 'aristocrats' in Mississippi politics] was a pivotal event in his life. . . . To twenty-five-year-old Faulkner, on the threshold of his career as a novelist, the episode [a scandal involving a politician who was once his grandfather's law partner] *must have* spoken volumes [emphasis added].

The trouble is, those of us who are not liberals feel restricted to writing biography from documentary evidence and to criticizing literature from a text. Further, Taylor's interpretation works only if we accept a simplistic scenario of Southern history as a conflict between "aristocrats" and "poor whites." (Any of Faulkner's works which cannot be made to conform to this scenario, like *The Unvanquished* or *The Reivers*, must be dismissed as "a mire of paternalistic propaganda," or "smug nostalgia," or "a parrotlike re-

Dr. Wilson is with the department of history at the University of South Carolina.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

creation of the Old Order's official rationale.") But one of the things that can be learned from Faulkner—or from anywhere else in Southern literature or history that one wants to look—is that the South has *always* been made up of a variety of middle classes as well as "aristocrats" and "poor whites." This is the beginning of all wisdom as far as the South is concerned, and it can be denied only under the strongest ideological imperative.

The effort to construe Southern history entirely in terms of the bipolar conflict of aristocrat and redneck leads to some strange twists in this work. For instance, we must accept that "aristocrats" have been "Cavaliers" and "poor whites" have been "Puritans." Southern poor whites traditionally have been blamed for every sin in the decalogue, but to find them characterized as the chief repositories of American "Puritanism" (a tortured term, here undefined), especially when construing a text, *Light in August,* which clearly deals with Northern Calvinists, is bizarre.

But at a more fundamental level, it seems to me, this treatment of Faulkner hopelessly blurs the line between a writer's life and times and his work. It is true, as Taylor quotes Ralph Ellison, that there is an "inescapable connection between the writer and the beliefs and attitudes current in his culture." But isn't the point of great literature that the connection is not simple, but rather complicated and original? One cannot understand any great literature until one understands that it is, in the first instance, vision and not opinion, description and not argument. Taylor is a Mississippian who has put the shame of his Southern origins behind him by adopting the conventional liberal view toward them. For him, Faulkner "failed" because he did not take the same route. But why must we assume that Faulkner ever wanted to find the South that Taylor has found, or that we would remember him if he had? May we not be forgiven for preferring the South that Faulkner did find, painful and ambivalent as it was for him and for us, to the more comforting but far less instructive one that he failed to find?

In essence, then, this work is merely another exercise in labeling that tells us more about the labeler than the labelee. It is one more installment in the Southern confession of sin, of which too much has already been inflicted upon the world.

Thomas Wolfe might be taken as the pioneer practitioner of the Southern confessional, but that would be only superficially true. While Wolfe wrote works that could be called confessional and his content was in part Southern, there was nothing intrinsically Southern about his confessional style. It was, rather, personal, and he often managed to turn his pain into artistic vision rather than political platitude. Secondly, Wolfe's confessional could not be fully Southern because he was not. Like Mark Twain, Wolfe was a fringe Southerner. The Asheville of his boyhood was an unrooted tourist haven. He knew the South the way one knows a city that one has passed through on a highway. Ever after the city looms in your mind characterized by the first glimpse of grimy industries and slums. You do not know how it really is to the people who *belong* there. That was pretty much Twain's and Wolfe's relation to the South—a gypsy one. Twain knew the South by the ugly backsides of river towns, under the bluff. Wolfe could never entirely separate the idea of the South from mountain boardinghouses for tubercular tourists and the villas of rich interlopers. His idea of the South was not so much wrong as incomplete. Which is not to say that it could not achieve at times a compelling power and interest.

Welcome to Our City was performed twice at a Harvard workshop theater in 1923, to local acclaim. A text of the script of that performance is here published for the first time (an abridgment of a different version, which Wolfe failed to market on Broadway, was published in 1957 in *Esquire).* This publication thus fulfills a scholarly purpose, enlarging the available knowledge of Wolfe and of the literature of the 1920's.

The title of the play is ironic. Superficially, the play is a conventional 1920's attack on boosterism, a theatrical *Main Street* with a Southern setting. It is, in effect, about a scheme of politicians and real-estate men in a small Southern city to snatch the central district from its traditional black residents.

Attacks on boosterism have rather faded with time and with the restoration of the notion that the decades hated by liberals (the 1920's and 1950's) were actually good times for us common folk. And intelligent people no longer take seriously reformers who believe that all would be right with the world if only we could clear the slums and suppress the fundamentalists. What makes Wolfe's play more than a dated, conventional attack on boosterism is its Southern setting. He has explosively wedded the race question to the genre. Further, the Southern context renders the elements of conflict ambivalent in another way. In Sinclair Lewis's Midwest we find a clear confrontation between boosterism (greed and convention) on the one hand, and enlightenment (idealism and cosmopolitanism) on the other. But in the South, not only does the conflict of black and white complicate matters, but boosterism is itself complicated by an alliance-conflict with the remnants of the Old Order. In this situation, enlightenment is at times an ally of boosterism. Wolfe wrote before the stereotypes, in the South at least, had achieved finality. Thus a progressive professor appears as a member of the booster coalition, and idealism, albeit a flawed and compromised version, is at least partly represented by an "Old Colonel" character, the remnant of a regime older and perhaps better than boosterism. Main Street was never this complicated.

Wolfe's treatment of the confrontation of races also preceded the hardening of stereotypes that began to take place in the 1930's and had become inviolable orthodoxy by the end of World War II. His blacks, like his Southern whites, are not sentimental heroes but tragically

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flawed characters. Neither blacks nor Southern whites will find themselves portrayed in a way that promotes a glow of warm contentment. Wolfe keeps his distance from both, and many of his characters are cruel caricatures. True, each one is a genuine and recognizable Southern type, but there is such an absence of positive types that a rounded picture does not emerge. Nevertheless, there is a brutal integrity in his observations.

Wolfe perhaps comes closer to a tragic, rather than a satiric, effect in his rendering of the interior racial dialogue of the South, a centuries-old phenomenon that has almost always been sentimentalized in American lore and literature. In the last scene, following the inevitable violent climax, an aging patrician and a reluctantly radical black patriarch are left to confront each other. "I belong to a day that is past!" laments the patrician. "An' wheah do I belong?" responds the black man. Wolfe's bitter detachment and lack of easy sentimentality doubtless explains why the play was never produced on Broadway and why it has remained largely unknown. □

A Dubious Discourse

Christopher Norris: *Deconstruction: Theory & Practice;* Methuen; New York.

Antony Easthope: *Poetry as Discourse;* Methuen; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

In 1963 Roland Barthes recommended: "watch who uses *signifier* and *signified, synchrony* and *diachrony,* and you will know whether the structuralist vision is constituted." When Barthes put that remark into an essay entitled "The Structuralist Activity," he was at the peak of his career as a structuralist. Yet, as is clear from that suggestion, as well as from the other signifiers that have both syntagmatic and paradigmatic (two more to look out for) relationships in that text, structuralism was a hard-to-define exercise. In the succeeding 20 years things have become less murky and more clear —at least with regard to the ophthalmologic condition of structuralism. But just when most were finally able to peg the clues as they presented themselves, the poststructuralist age leaped full-grown from Jacques Derrida's head.

Christopher Norris is able to write in a tone that is undoubtedly meant to evoke the *ubi sunt* formula for the briefest moment: "Barthes was a brilliant stylist and a highly original—at times even wayward —constructor of theories." The past tense of the verb in that sentence signifies more than the fact that M. Barthes has been tucked away in his grave since 1980. This is evident if the syntagmatic chain of that utterance (another word to monitor) is examined. Antony Easthope is a great one for using all of the words noted so far, so his explanation of this aspect is in order:

> [T]he syntagmatic chain is not to be identified with the sentence. Sentences pertain to the syntactic rules of a language. . . . The syntagmatic chain does operate within the sentence but it also operates beyond the sentence in the way sentences become cohesive as discourse. [Keep an eye on *discourse.*] For example 'I hate pigs' is a sentence correctly generated within the rules of English syntax. Extension of the syntagmatic chain with another sentence (such as either 'However, I like horses' or 'Last week I got busted') would firmly identify the chain as belonging to agricultural or to bohemian discourse.

Now, this means that "meaning" can be found in the syntagmatic chain, even if that chain, by the rules of conventional grammar, is a fragment. A sufficiently long chain—and how long is never clear —becomes a discourse. This should come as no surprise to anyone. Conversation is full of fragments, though people tend not to notice them. Some of the dialogue in Ford Madox Ford's novels caused outrage in his day because he rendered this aspect of communication. Now we yawn.

Another reference from Easthope is necessary: "Conscious intention is brought about along the syntagmatic chain where meaning 'insists' but this place is always produced as an effect of the Other [another], which remains outside it and so to that extent unconscious." "The Other" is a term that's often used by the followers of one Jacques Lacan. Lacan, a psychoanalyst, used it before he joined Barthes in the Other in 1981. Although it is getting fairly crowded in here (a metaphor, I should note, that identifies the graphematic aspect of this discourse: language, as Derrida has it, is a thing, therefore it has dimensions), another name must be introduced: Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure, a linguist, died in 1913, though he is the man to blame for much of the current jargon. More precisely, some of his students are to blame, for they compiled lectures and notes to create *Course in General Linguistics,* which has become something of a bible in the hands of certain otherwise agnostic Frenchmen.

Saussure promoted several types of categories. He distinguished between the noteworthy (in the sense of Barthes, that is) *langue* and *parole.* The former is essentially a system: language. Parole, then, is a speech act (don't let *speech* fool you; writing is the primary concern today, though it wasn't for Saussure) within that language. Then there are the signifier and the signified. If you watch those two little words long enough, you'll see that they become virtually as high as the Eiffel Tower, as broad as the Louvre, and as fulsome as the Seine in critical, philosophical discourses. To cheat by making things as simple as possible, I'll say/write that the signifier is the word

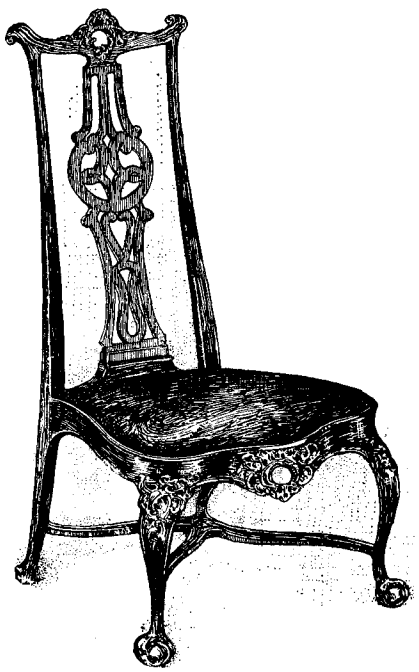
Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of Chronicles of Culture.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the signified the concept. The argument goes that you can't have a signified without a signifier, which is a nice trick as it serves to foreground words ahead of ideas for those who are inclined to take the trump. (Pardon the interruption, but chances are, "trick" and "trump" undoubtedly stand out in the preceeding so much that they, unlike the other words, called attention to themselves as signifiers. And that is what much of this is all about.) Now, although the concept of words as *things* begins to sound like what Gulliver was introduced to in the school of language at the Grand Academy of Lagado (e.g., "since words are only names for *things*, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them such *things* as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on"), it isn't precisely the case. One could carry about a pocketful of words for a short discussion or a satchelful for a long one and the agenda wouldn't necessarily come out as planned. One signifier can have numerous signifieds. Signifiers are, so it's claimed, *there*, and signifieds are arbitrarily welded to them. An important feature of this *langue-parole*/signifiers-signified scheme is that context becomes vital, in the life-giving sense. Saussure maintained that a signifier meaningfully exists only in relation to other signifiers. Thus, the concept of the syntagmatic chain becomes slightly more clear: elements are lined up, hooked together, and supportive of the others. There's more to it, of course, but now we must attend to the Other. The Other is what's not there. For example, as Foucault and Blanchot (two names to add to the now-burgeoning list) would have it, death is the Other that life isn't. The Other for this sentence is the many words not used but possibly implied by the 17 here. Or, in Easthope's words, "the island is only there because the sea is withdrawn." What lesson can be drawn from this? Context! Context! Context!

The quotation from Christopher Norris once again: "Barthes was a brilliant stylist and a highly original—at times even wayward—constructor of theories." On the face of it, the eulogy is most kind. However, what about the Other? In this case, determining what it is is fairly simple, given two things: (1) the use of the word *constructor* and (2) the title of Norris's book: *Deconstruction: Theory & Practice*. Norris, wielding Derrida's disintegrating fescue, eliminates Barthes limb by limb, signifier by signifier in a fairly brutal manner. It must be pointed out, though, that Norris is forced to take large chunks at a time due to the space limitations imposed by the publisher (see, words can take up lots of room). Although it is still a bit early in the day to say *bonne nuit* to M. Barthes, it is obvious that his shadow is dissolving in the salons of the City of Light.

Deconstruction is currently one of those words that evoke among "more conventional" critics and scholars a response that is not unlike that of a mother with a child at an R-rated film. When the R-rated scene appears, she inevitably covers the child's eyes. In time, of course, the child becomes an adult and must face those scenes unshielded. *Structuralism* once had the same power; it was cowered from. Things have changed. Norris says with bitterness in an opening salvo, "What started as a powerful protest against ruling critical assumptions ended up as just one more available method for saying new things about well-worn texts." Structuralism is now rated PG. And with good reason. Two things were initially held against structuralism. One was that it presented itself in a quasi-scientific guise. For many academics in the literary community, the debate between the two cultures is over—not completed, just over. Literature is not to be subject to equations, they maintained. So that was that for structuralism. Why this resistance passed is hard to establish. Perhaps the popularity of structuralism was infectious; perhaps literary scholars became enamored of pocket calculators and digital watches during the 70's and so figured that technology was okay.



The second objection remains one and, what is more, deconstructionists have taken up the baton. Barthes, among others, one of whom is Derrida, said that the "author is dead." This was apparently more shocking than Nietzsche's infamous bon mot. Blood pressure levels rose throughout university literature departments in the West. The implication of such a statement was that the guardians of the great and not-so-great authors were performing a pointless task. But that isn't the case. As everyone knows, a joke is killed when it is methodically explained; its magic is suddenly evacuated. A true novel, play, or poem can be explained and dissected over and over and over again yet still remain pregnant with meaning. The reason behind these two cases is that a joke merely has a horizontal dimension (A then B then C) while literature is multidimensional. Consider Shakespeare. With the amount of scholarship that has been performed on his works (and no one has *proved* that the man we know and love is really the right guy) it would seem that their meaning would have been established once and for all long ago. But no, that's not the case. For example, new interpretations of *Hamlet* emerge on a regular basis. Why—because of Shakespeare? No—because of the various interpreters who apply their knowl-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edge and skills to the play. Clearly, *Hamlet* doesn't have the same meaning for audiences in 1983 that it had for those who witnessed its opening in 1602. What we see today are not the author's intentions: how could he have imagined this world? There exists a difference. The author is "dead" because the reader is "alive" to make meaning. Everyone does it all the time. Each person reading this text will construe it differently from another; my readings will change as the words go from pencil to ink to type. Does this mean that *all* interpretations of any given work are equally valid? In a sense, the answer is yes. All writing—and literature, in particular—is protean; it can never be explained with complete exactitude: once you think you've got it, it slips away and changes: or you change. Things get very scary to conventional readers when an affirmative answer is given to the question of whether all of this doesn't mean that the author's explanation is really no better than that of a person from Yale or the Collège de France. Why this is so can be explained fairly simply if the preexisting material nature of signifiers is taken as a given: the author is unable to say what he really means. Or, it can be argued that the author, by making his work public, loses certain rights: once the manuscript is out of the desk drawer and onto the bookshelves, everyone has an equal crack at it. Doesn't this then lead to interpretative anarchy? Taken to an extreme, it does. But common sense must be applied, in the same way that it must be when making measurements: Euclid works better than Einstein, even though the latter is, as far as we know, more correct.

Deconstruction, so Norris would lead one to believe, is rated X and ever shall be. He and Antony Easthope are among the best representatives for what's worst about modern critical theory. Norris is obviously smug; he thinks he knows it all. Norris writes, "For Nietzsche, as for Derrida, the project of absolute knowledge [i.e., Western philosophical speculation] was deluded at source by its forgetfulness of how *language* creates and capriciously misleads the processes of thought." To deconstruct. And to risk misinterpretation throughout: misreading is more common than you can imagine. One of Derrida's main concepts is *différance* (list still out?). Basically, referring back to the before-mentioned material nature of words, this means that a writer's intentions are not necessarily manifest in his text because the signifiers are *things* and from the whole collection of *things*, the author must make a selection, even though the fit isn't just right—sort of like a pair of shoes that are too big or too small: the shoes are still serviceable. Derrida suggests, it seems, that the written "nature" (my word), the graphematic structure (his) of language is primary: even a man making a speech must "pick his words." *Différance* comes in in that the writer must *defer* to language and in that his meaning (and the reader's reading) must *differ* from the written text. Derrida's clever word game insists that approximations are as close as anyone can get: there's no such thing as the real thing.

Now here's why no one needs to shy away from deconstruction. Like any good scholar, Derrida performs close readings of texts (as do his American heirs, such as de Man and Hartman). Derrida has read the canonical works of Western philosophy and has indicated what he perceives as the shortcomings of what are accepted beliefs. The shortcomings stem from the fact that Plato and all of the rest had to work with language. Of course, Derrida gives the philosophers their due as cunning men, and so he claims that the "truths" are really ruses. He deconstructs their game; he shows how the tricks work. The tricks are typically based on rhetoric. Deconstruction, then, is just another means through which its adherents can propose that ultimately we can *know* nothing. That isn't exactly original. While often boring, deconstructive readings can be amusing and can even provide insights. Thus, while it is still "adults-only" fare, it isn't particularly risqué. What is surprising about Norris's handling of the subject is his reverential approach to Derrida. Derrida is, for him, the Last Word. We know that that is impossible, deconstructively speaking.

Easthope, another Derridian epigone, is less smug. But he is more radical, though in the standard political sense. Although he is most familiar with the main figures in poststructuralist thought and provides some workmanlike explanations, he sounds as if he was suckled by Gramsci. That is, *Poetry as Discourse* is essentially an examination of the history of English poetry from a standpoint that can be discerned (to borrow an approach from Barthes) from this sentence: "A poem obviously is an example of *parole*, an utterance constructed according to and within the system of a language." Easthope, however, grinds an axe more than he deconstructs. His thesis is buried among the signifiers that should now constitute the list of words to watch for, but it shines out like glowing swamp gas:

> English poetic discourse since the Renaissance is the product of history, ideologically determined. In this respect it is an epochal form, coterminous with the capitalist mode of production and the hegemony of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bourgeoisie as the ruling class. It is therefore a *bourgeois* poetic discourse.

Easthope sets out to prove that iambic pentameter is the most insidious tool for keeping the masses downtroddened since capital was developed. To return to the chiropodic metaphor. It becomes clear that literary theories are like feet. They are wonderful devices for going places. They can also get stuck in one's mouth, vide Easthope. □

Twinkle, Twinkle

Daniel Graham: *High Frontier;* Tor; New York.

Thomas Karas: *The New High Ground;* Simon and Schuster; New York.

James Canan: *War in Space;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

These three works deal with aspects of what will be a crucial problem of the next generation: the exploitation of space travel and its effect on the arms race. Daniel Graham's *High Frontier* advocates convincingly an all-out space effort for both military and economic purposes. James Canan's book is a straight reportorial account of the American side of the arms race and the military aspects of space. Thomas Karas, while giving a comparable description of the military in space, pours cold water on the ideas expressed by Graham and other space-power advocates.

It is no accident that *High Frontier* has the same title as Gerard K. O'Neill's splendid exploration of the prospects for space industrialization and colonization by the development of orbiting settlements. O'Neill envisages the eventual use of lunar and asteroid sources of raw materials in space to develop whole new industries and energy supplies. Eventually, perhaps, most of earth's industry could move out into space. General Graham looks toward a similar future, though his attention is focused on the first stages of O'Neill's projected scheme —with a heavy dash of political realism. O'Neill looks forward to space as a demilitarized field of purely civilian progress. Graham regards it as an inevitable arena of military competition.

But that is not necessarily a bad thing. For, Graham argues, space may be the means of breaking the United States, and humanity as a whole, out of the doctrine designated by the acronym MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction). MAD is based on the thesis that nuclear war will inevitably lead to the destruction of both sides. No *effective* strategic defense is possible, or perhaps even desirable, and the attempt to build a defense against nuclear attack will merely "destabilize" the situation. No first strike can cripple the opposing side enough to remove the threat of retaliation, so a war of aggression by the Soviets is impossible. The safest situation is one wherein both sides recognize that they can destroy each other and are content with this situation. Though MAD proponents don't quite claim we are living in the best of all possible worlds, some of their notions imply it.

It is an open question whether the insane situation described as MAD is simply a logical result—more precisely a natural *stage* — of the nuclear-arms race, or simply the result of a stupid doctrine which could and should have been wholly avoided. Graham seems to incline toward the latter view. Whatever the truth of this assessment, however, MAD is now clearly obsolete as a doctrine, or a description. Multiple warheads, super-accurate guidance systems, and the Soviet buildup have made a successful Soviet first strike against America's land-based missiles feasible.

For Graham, the answer to the threat is not the development of new offensive weapons systems, but the resumption by our military forces of something resembling their traditional function. Instead of regarding the American civilian population as hostages doomed to annihilation if somebody is sufficiently aggressive, we should try to defend ourselves. The first step is a "quick fix," the development of a "point defense" of our missile bases by ground-based devices using currently available technology. This would throw a degree of uncertainty into Soviet calculations and deter a Soviet first strike in the near future. A number of alternative systems are possible, including one adapting a rapid-fire antitank weapon already carried by Air Force planes. The next steps involve the creation of two successive "generations" of space-based general defensive systems. Ultimately a network of orbital energy weapons—probably lasers—would protect us.

All these programs, Graham argues, should be tied together and developed in concert with the drive for the economic utilization of space. The development of a replacement for the shuttle and a military space-plane are required. These High Frontier programs should be managed in a new way and freed of the inefficiency of bureaucratic red tape. This inefficiency—amply documented by James Canan—is not only deplorably wasteful but incredibly dangerous. The time span for the development of new weapons systems is now an average of 13 years as compared to four to six years in the 1950's, and the difference cannot be accounted for just by the increasing complexity of weapons.

The specifics of Graham's program may not be valid—and it is clear that there are a lot of difficulties to be overcome in making energy weapons work and protecting them from attack—but the High Frontier idea is one of very few positive answers offered for our country's defense problems. It provides the op-

Dr. Levine is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

portunity to use our country's strength —the lead in space technology and its capabilities in microelectronics. And, unlike other defense programs, it may aid economic recovery. Thus, the concepts presented in *High Frontier* are worthy of the closest and most careful examination.

Canan's *War in Space* is of value to anyone interested in a brief, clear account of military space developments and how some of our strategic-arms policies were formulated under the last few Presidents (an interesting, though not very comforting, story). While Canan does not definitely favor space-based antiballistic missile defense, he does cite facts that seem to favor Graham's ideas. For example, he notes that the Soviets are not averse to contemplating strategic defense. There are indications that the Soviets are ahead of us in work on particle-beam weapons. They may already have tested a primitive form of an antisatellite "battle station" armed with interceptor rockets.

Thomas Karas is no enthusiast for moving into space in a military way. Karas's book, in fact, is an interesting example of a syndrome identified by Graham: the inclination to dismiss all ideas for strategic defense as unworkable and unworthy, because no defense is ever going to be utterly impregnable. It is also an example of liberal ritualism at work, the repetition of fashionable beliefs that are treated as axiomatic when they are actually very doubtful. Predictably, Karas treats MAD as neither a transient situation nor a doctrine—it is an objective, practically unchangeable condition. Karas claims that "The myth that MAD has been the central principle of U.S. nuclear strategy is traceable to the unrelenting hostility felt by military hardliners, in and out of uniform, toward Robert McNamara." McNamara and his aides, Karas asserts, "have never been forgiven for their attempt to impose managerial rationality on the previously intuitive art of military decision-making." It may be a surprise to historians to learn that military decisions were based on intuition before the 1960's. Some of McNamara's own policies suggest intuition at work, e.g., his announcement in 1963 that we would be out of Vietnam by 1965 and his later assurance that the Soviets would not catch up with or overtake the American missile lead.

Karas does mention some of the possible countermeasures to laser weapons, such as protective coatings for warheads. He prefers to resort to the fashionable dictums: "space laser weapons will not protect us from the threat of nuclear war." Rather, they "offer an excellent opportunity for preventive arms control." Moreover, "with or without new space systems, we can't win a nuclear war." Unfortunately, in the present situation, the issue is not whether *we* can win a nuclear war, but preventing the Soviets from doing so. They, after all, not we, seem to have the equipment *and* the willingness to launch nuclear aggression. The unwinnability of nuclear war is not a law of nature but the result of a particular situation, one which may now be passing into history. Whether its disappearance will mean more danger for us or less is still unclear and may yet be affected by our actions. The notion that we can rely on arms-control agreements with a party of proven untrustworthiness and aggressive intent to get us out of our dilemma is absurd. It merely shows, again, that some people have learned nothing from the history of the last 40 years, or that fraud known as "détente." □

Getting & Spending

***Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society;* Edited by Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz; University of Illinois Press; Urbana.**

A. David Silver: *The Entrepreneurial Life: How to Go for It and Get It;* John Wiley & Sons; New York.

Peter Carlson: *Roughneck: The Life and Times of Big Bill Haywood;* W. W. Norton; New York.

by Gavin D. Arbuckle

One of the oddest intellectual trends of recent years has been the abandonment of economic determinism by writers on the left and its adoption by some writers on the right. The notion that all important human affairs are controlled by economic relations is a key element of Marx's theories, yet the most influential leftist writers of today commonly operate in the fields of literature, history, sociology, and education, rather than in economics.

Conversely, some conservative economic writers with a libertarian perspective tend to raise economic efficiency to the role of both a satisfactory explanation of most human events and a sufficient moral justification for public policy. Jude Wanniski's farcical suggestion that Gaul incorporated itself into the Roman Republic in order to enjoy the advantages of free trade in the Mediterranean is surely the nadir of a decade of conservative flirtation with economic determinism.

The importance of noneconomic factors in shaping human activity is brought out by these three books, which are written from very different perspectives. *Working-Class America* presents academic articles on labor history; *Roughneck* is a popular biography of radical labor leader Big Bill Haywood; and *The Entrepreneurial Life* is a combined instruction manual and cheerleader's guide for people seeking fulfillment by setting up a small business.

A. David Silver's book on entrepreneurship is more interesting than the usual get-rich-quick manual, as it covers a

Mr. Arbuckle is an economist who writes from Madison, Wisconsin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wide range of subjects, from psychological profiles of entrepreneurs to a brief theory of their role in the economy. Much of the diversity may be inadvertent, as the book resembles nothing more than a hurriedly assembled assortment of old speeches and copied magazine articles. If that's what it is, then Silver is to be admired, since the ability to turn old files, clippings, and other academic detritus into profitable and publishable material with a minimum of fresh inspiration is the mark of a truly accomplished literary entrepreneur. Silver's most interesting finding is that there appears to be a substantial regularity in the psychological profiles of successful entrepreneurs. It is characterized by such things as the presence of a strong mother, the absence of a father, and the experience of physical or social handicaps in the upbringing of those who later exhibit the willingness to take risks and the drive to succeed as independent businessmen.

Not the least of Silver's virtues is his willingness to let his psychological findings speak for themselves, without filtering them through a screen of moralizing, ideological distortion, and bogus Freudianism. It is something of a shock to find any psychological study reported only for its intrinsic interest instead of being drafted into the service of some barely disguised political argument. Most popular psychology falls into two classes. The ideologically motivated writers of the *Psychology Today* variety endlessly manipulate such slippery notions as the "authoritarian personality" in what appears to be a determination to have the condition *Republican* redefined as a mental illness. The writers of self-improvement paperbacks, on the other hand, make a pretense of promoting psychological health, while in fact purveying the voyeuristic enjoyment of the case histories of a multitude of aberrant individuals.

Silver's own psychological findings throw considerable doubt on his prediction that large companies will begin breaking up into semiautonomous contracting groups operating on an entrepreneurial basis. Even if production technology changes to the point at which economies of scale and coordination and control problems permit efficient decomposition of firms on this basis (a highly dubious proposition), the psychological characteristics that make entrepreneurs willing to take large risks and work with extraordinary intensity may simply not be present in the mass of workers Silver expects to adopt the new arrangement.

Frisch's and Walkowitz's turgid and verbose introduction to *Working-Class America* claims that the book is radical, innovative, and important. It isn't. The book actually contains ten careful, dry studies of a series of narrowly defined topics in the history of the American labor movement from the 1790's to around 1950. The rather unlikely suggestion that this collection of articles represents a major new development in the study of American labor history could be explained in two ways. Perhaps the existing work in this field is so uniformly dreadful that any research demonstrating basic competence represents a major improvement. More likely is the possibility that a great deal of exaggeration and puffing is needed to convince publishers, let alone readers, to take an interest in such less-than-scintillating subjects as the conditions in small New England textile mills from 1812 to 1840, 19th-century class culture in Pittsburgh, or the history of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers union between 1910 and 1930.

The most encouraging characteristic of *Working-Class America* is the relative absence of the Marxist howling and tub-thumping which so often afflict writing about trade unions. One of the writers, Christine Stansell, does manage to get off a couple of paragraphs savagely condemning capitalists for exploiting women by both hiring them and refusing to hire them, but her heart doesn't seem to be in it. Several paragraphs describing the economic problems facing employers take the sting out of her earlier remarks, and her article fades away to bland respectability.

If there is a unifying theme to be drawn from the articles it must be the relative importance of noneconomic factors in determining the role of unions and the conduct of labor relations. Culture, race, political attitudes, and social conditions reappear in all of the studies, interacting with technological changes and market fluctuations in determining the conduct of the labor force. Theories of economic determinism, whether drawn from writers of the left or right, run the risk of ignoring the powerful influence of these social and cultural factors on human behavior.

"[*Working-Class America* is] the pick of a growing crop."

—**Michael Kazin**
The Nation

Peter Carlson's biography of Big Bill Haywood is a highly entertaining book. Haywood himself was a rather straightforward man who led a fascinating life, as a miner and union organizer in the West, as a leading figure in the Industrial Workers of the World, and as a convicted subversive and fugitive in the Soviet Union. Judged as an intellectual, Bill Haywood does not fare well. His belief that workers could better their lot only by seizing political power through a general strike rather than through the political system is not only wrong but antidemocratic. He possessed an uninformed admiration for the Soviet Union in its earliest years, an affliction shared by many more sophisticated minds.

Haywood came by his radicalism honestly, in the grinding poverty and atrocious working conditions of the Western mining camps of the 1880's and 1890's. His disdain for the American system of government was grounded in the experience of miners' strikes being broken

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by state police and soldiers, the open collusion of elected officials and mine owners, and the flagrant disregard of constitutional rights, even as they were more narrowly defined in those days, by state courts and politicians eager to suppress union activity.

Haywood's radicalization was helped along by several clouts with rifle butts, admittedly a powerful motivation by any standard. He had more excuse for seizing on radical doctrines than the modern unionists, who often get their outrage from books. When Haywood talked about oppression of workers he was probably thinking about the rockfall in an unsafe mine that crippled his hand. One suspects that his sympathy with the Marxist effetes who discuss workers' "alienation" and "psychic oppression" would have been severely limited.

The trade-union movement has long been dining out on the injustices of 80 years ago. In spite of the development of entrenched legal monopolies in the provision of labor, substantial legal and administrative rights for union members, and accretions of political and financial power undreamed of in Haywood's time, even the most sedentary union bureaucrat sees himself as the rightful heir to those early organizers who served years in jails and fled Pinkerton's police. One suspects that Bill Haywood would be less than impressed by some of those who trade on the memory of his organizing drives.

One remarkable aspect of Haywood's story is the seeming ease with which governments could act in the early years of this century. Once a group of trade unionists was deemed a menace, the state governments used imprisonment without trial, declarations of martial law, and deportations to suppress them, while court action to halt these practices was often ineffective and almost always delayed. The courts proved willing to enforce Federal laws prohibiting disloyalty and subversion in the most general terms. Nowadays governments must wade through rivers of writs and injunctions, hearings, and appeals to get anyone locked up, and it is extremely difficult to do it rapidly. Civil libertarians, who are commonly neither civil nor libertarians, probably see this as an unmixed blessing. Yet in a sense it represents an abdication of political responsibility. Political leadership as it used to be conceived involved a trade-off. Politicians used their powers of office to buy popularity and esteem. In times of crisis, they would in turn tread the very fringes of the law, which is, unfortunately, sometimes a necessary evil to reduce risk to the public good.

Dealing with potential subversives, particularly in wartime, is an activity which rarely finds favor with historians and commentators after the fact, whether it concerns Industrial Workers of the World or Japanese Americans. Whatever the merits of those particular cases, it used to be recognized that political leaders who took their responsibilities seriously might from time to time have to get their hands dirty, to suffer some public obloquy, and to defend their actions in due course before the electorate. Modern legal restrictions seek to confine political leaders to the role of rather seedy philanthropists who are permitted to disburse taxpayers' money for a wide variety of purposes but prevented from taking the sort of quick, dirty, and disreputable actions which are often the most effective responses to threats to the public good.

Politicians may like the change. It preserves the pleasing part of their jobs while relieving them of responsibility for the unpleasant part. It remains doubtful whether the feeble politicians can deal with modern crises such as violent crime at home and Soviet subversion abroad without the benefit of the rather loose and freewheeling legal and philosophical atmosphere of the earlier years of this century. □

A Man Among Mice

William Manchester: *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, Visions of Glory, 1874-1932;* Little, Brown; Boston.

by Allen G. Weakland

Lady Lytton probably summed up the aura of Winston Churchill most effectively when she said, "The first time you meet Winston you see all his faults and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues." Those who have chronicled Churchill's life have been liberal about providing a compendium of his faults. Churchill was, after all, an albatross around the necks of a gaggle of British Prime Ministers and politicians from the turn of the century until past its midpoint. One would hardly get an objective appraisal from, say, Ramsay MacDonald, whom Churchill publicly compared to the traveling circus's Boneless Wonder. The same holds true of most of the other English statesmen of the time who, compared with Churchill, were third-rate men, plain and simple.

Churchill is an excellent subject for a biography because he had such an interesting life. He lived for 91 years, the first 20 of which were more than compensated for by the remainder. In his formative years, he evinced no signs of future greatness, shackled as he was by a brilliant, but distant and increasingly mad, father, Randolph, and a freethinking, absentee mother, Jennie, who gave new meaning to the word *promiscuous.* It is an everlasting credit to Churchill's name that, dealt that sort of a hand, he played the game straight. Many political peccadilloes may be attributed to him, but he was never anything but a hardworking man and a faithful husband. Not only was he an outstanding statesman, but he was also an excellent writer (the latter pursued primarily because he had diffi-

Mr. Weakland is the proprietor of Editorial Reviewers, Cranford, New Jersey.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

culty in keeping his personal finances in order).

After Churchill left the stage, we were left with the politician as manager. He may have been the last truly heroic statesman. Ellen Wilkinson, quoted in Kingsley Martin's *Harold Laski,* said, "When Mr. Attlee is presiding in the absence of the Prime Minister the Cabinet meets on time, goes systematically through its agenda, makes the necessary decisions, and goes home after three or four hours work. When Mr. Churchill presides, we never reach the agenda and we decide nothing. But we go home to bed at midnight, conscious of having been present at an historic occasion." In our statistically minded society, it is easy to disguise insipid leadership by holding up a list of makeshift objectives reached. But this wasn't Churchill's way. He was boldness personified.

Churchill may have inadvertently coined an epigraph for a century of leaders—save for the international coterie who made their marks in the World War II era—when he observed an occasion in which "an empty limousine pulled up in front of #10 Downing Street and out stepped Clement Attlee." The truth of the matter is that most of England's statesmen of Churchill's time were what Evelyn Waugh, describing the new modern man symbolized by Rex Mottram in *Brideshead Revisited,* called "Tiny pieces of men pretending to be whole." There can be no doubt of Churchill's wholeness.

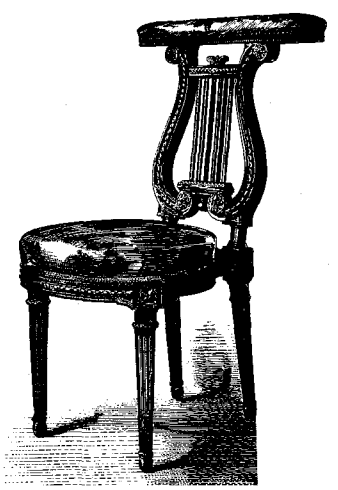
William Manchester chronicles this breadth in his extensive biography of Churchill's first 58 years. His book appeared at a time when there is a renewed kindling of interest in Churchill. *The Last Lion* comes on the heels of Ted Morgan's recent partial biography, *Churchill: Young Man In a Hurry,* which covers a slightly more compressed period of Churchill's life. In Manhattan this past spring, the Institute of Design held a showing of Churchill's surprisingly adept artwork. Public Television's *Masterpiece Theatre* recently ran a fine series, entitled *Churchill: The Wilderness Years,* in which Messrs. Baldwin, MacDonald, and Chamberlain were held up on display as the "tiny pieces of men" that they were.

> "a curiously bloated book . . . lacking focus . . . . Part of the problem is . . . Mr. Manchester's inability to grapple with ideological concepts."
>
> —*New York Times Book Review*

Winnie, a musical based on Churchill in World War II, is slated to open on Broadway.

Why is there this sudden surge of interest in this man of another age, this *anachronism,* as implied by the title, *The Last Lion?* I think that the answer, again, centers on the "blandness factor" of modern leadership. All of the works cited above were begun in the decade of Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Edward Heath, Giscard d'Estaing, Helmut Schmidt, Hua Kuo-feng—all of whom would fit just as well in corporate boardrooms.

Heroism has taken flight and glory has gone out on its wing. The man who should have ranked alongside Henry Ford and the Wright Brothers—Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon—I daresay is unknown to a majority of today's youth. One of the reasons, of course, is that Armstrong's accomplishment was a triumph of the committee—in this case, the legions of scientists, technicians, and mathematicians at NASA. The heroes of the past did the planning, the organizing, and the work themselves. Today's would-be heroes are only front men. Thus, we look to the great men of the past to feed our need for heroic deeds. And Churchill fits the bill. Anyone wishing to dip into his trough of accomplishments would do well to begin with William Manchester's book. Ted Morgan's *Young Man In a Hurry* unfortunately evinces a smart-aleckyness that seeks to put Churchill in his place at any opportunity. Manchester restores the balance. To mention just two examples, Morgan makes Churchill out to be the supreme cad for the circumstances of his escape from war-prisoner status during the Boer War, in which his two coescapees-to-be were left behind. Manchester demonstrates the unavoidable innocence of the situation. Morgan accepts the negative judgment of Churchill's peers concerning the ill-fated Dardanelles mission of World War I. Manchester, calling Churchill a military genius, demonstrates the sheer brilliance of the plan and lays the blame squarely on the pusillanimity of the various commanders involved and the unexplainable incipient madness and indecisiveness of Lord Jacky Fisher.



Churchill's world view may very well, as Manchester implies, have been steeped in visions of the Victorian *pax Britannia,* but because of that, he was able to mold that spirit into national purpose in the war against Hitler. It may be true that contemporary Western analysis, self-doubt, and self-questioning have robbed us of the ability to trust heroes. But as long as there is a younger generation, some of whom will read of Churchill's exploits, somewhere the process of emulation might begin and a new generation of heroes be forged. That won't solve all of our problems, but at least it will give us something to rally around besides word processors, kiss-and-tell talk shows, and faceless statesmen who lull us to sleep. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Open—Or Empty?

Dante Germino: *Political Philosophy and the Open Society;* Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl: *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World;* Yale University Press; New Haven, CT.

by Guy S. Brown

In the work of Professor Germino's prime mentor, Eric Voegelin, and that of Hannah Arendt, the subject of Professor Young-Bruehl's biography, we have the head and the heart of a theory of man that understands politics as phenomenality, as self-disclosure in a space of appearances, originating in the "experiential locus of humanity." This locus is a problematic "Between" in which, according to Germino, "man experiences the pull of the Divine Ground and the counter-pull of evil and death," or in which, according to Hannah Arendt, man experiences "the world," including the "love of the world": "The world lies in between people," and people themselves are "between past and future." In either case, however, it is a theory which, politically, seems remarkably self-centered. Hence it does not seem whole, or even fully political. It does not see itself as it is or as others see it.

Certainly, one would not deny that the work of Eric Voegelin and much in the work of Hannah Arendt provide an effective positive rallying point for anti-positivists—or more generally, for those who tend to resist what Jan Huizinga in 1935 called "the anti-noetic tendencies of our whole age." But resistance to the antinoetic tendencies of our age and political philosophy are not necessarily one and the same thing; besides, resistance to the tendencies of "our age" may lead merely to intensified definition, or to being closed in by some of them.

Dr. Brown is with the U.S. Information Agency.

Dante Germino here asserts, as he has before, the need for openness in society, and the most famous of the works by Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* emphasizes the evil effects of political closure. "Openness" is, as it were, "in." It is the rallying point of "our age." From J. Robert Oppenheimer's famous lecture on "The Open Mind" to Karl Popper's celebrated "Postscript," *The Open Universe,* the "open society" has come summarily to represent the alternative to all the prejudice and provincialism that we despise and fear in others and in ourselves. It is hailed as the glory and the last best hope of the West and ultimately of the world because it represents both the first line of defense and the last comprehensive—if not impregnable—bastion of "man." The "open society" is the highest impulse of the rationalist ethos, carrying all the baggage of enlightened liberalism. The "open society" is our standard for judging human society. In effect, it is our notion of "civilization," in which the "welfare state" appears as merely a compassionate way station or necessary compromise.

Marxist and kindred ideological criticisms are usually limited to critiques of the welfare state as it exists now and promises to exist in the foreseeable future; they do not extend so far as the aim itself. After all, the Hobbesian origin of the *Manifesto's* credo—"the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all"—should be clear enough. And the ideal of the amateur once celebrated by aristocratic Victorian gentlemen is implicit if not vulgarized in Marx's own claim that in the "future society" it will be possible "for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to breed cattle in the afternoon, criticize after dinner, just as I like, without ever becoming a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critic." Marx does not deny that his own cameo of human potential and attainment would fit neatly about the shoulders of a Xenophon or a Leonardo. But these are only individual exceptions "ahead of their time" and not social attainments: they are attainments earned despite the fact that others in society were but economic ciphers, because of which most humans have not attained anything of the species' true potential. Since past society can provide little or no guide toward the understanding of that potential, man as yet has no proper history but only a "prehistory" of class struggle, that is, only economic history. History proper has been choked off. Society must be changed, opened up, and this opening must be universal in order for humanity to emerge in everyone and not just in the odd exception. Society must be changed for the sake of the average man so that he may be the "new man," that is, truly "man." Only then, in the open society of the future, that is, in communist or scientific "socialism," the "average human type," as Trotsky thought he foresaw, "will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx." It is for "man" that the enlightened universal classless society exists—or rather, thanks to the revolutionary action of prehistorical futurists, will exist—although it admittedly is now little more than a hope for and in "science."

It goes without saying that the standard of the open society itself has received some criticism. Willmoore Kendall criticized it in "The Open Society and Its Fallacies" on the ground that the "openness" of a whole society, however liberal, can never attain the openness of one good mind, and that an open society is not necessarily an equitable society, or even a "society." On the other hand, not all admitted friends of the open society entirely subscribe to all of Popper's formulations for it. Germino and Arendt, for whom Popper is but a "leading positivist," do not.

For the most part, *Political Philosophy and the Open Society* is a redaction

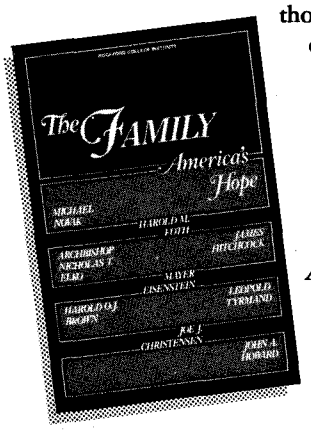
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the neo-Augustinian doctrines of Eric Voegelin. It is devoted to revealing and continuing the "revival of political theory" as "one of the momentous intellectual and cultural developments of our time," and to "highlighting" the contributions of Eric Voegelin to this revival. Still, Professor Germino does more; he goes further. The open society as understood by Professor Germino is a spiritual rather than a material society. He agrees that it is "only on a global scale that the open society idea can be realized, for mankind is in principle one community." But even on that scale world government would only include the bodies of all those living, not their souls. The soul transcends the limits of any worldly society. It is the souls of men which are at home in the open society. The open society includes the souls of all those living, as well as all those who have ever lived or who ever will live. Germino is silent about whether this habitation is to be understood as being simultaneous and whether it is simply egalitarian. His point is that the open society is "not a concrete society existing in the world, but a symbol which indicates man's consciousness of participating . . . in the mystery of a reality which moves toward its transfiguration." As such one might suppose that it—or that what it represents or is supposed to represent—exists, and always has and will so long as there are men, whatever men say or do on earth. Professor Germino, it seems, does so suppose, but, instead of being led by this supposition to reconsider, for example, certain familiar doctrines of stoicism more thoroughly and openly than he has done, he goes further and insists that "the open society is a paradigm to be approximated but never fully attained." That is, "the open society . . . is the valid goal for human beings to seek in their collective efforts," viz., through political action.

This is a dubious exhortation. And Germino allows himself to drift into humdrum editorializing. Lest anyone suppose that such a conception reduces politics to mere ritual, the author provides an exemplary guideline for our "collective efforts." Since "elites" rule and have done so in all worldly societies, and since the spiritual or symbolic society actually presumes a multiracial composition, one should not shrink from setting forth programs intended to diversify the worldly elites as much as possible along color lines, not excluding "a conscious policy of favoring for a time the entrance of nonwhite persons into elite positions as against equally qualified whites." He goes on to insist that "The white sector must willingly assume the task of redressing generations of injustice inflicted on nonwhites." If I am not mistaken this is the only reference to justice in the book. No doubt the author passionately believes that the injustice inflicted by whites on nonwhites is much greater than that which has presumably been inflicted by "elites" on "nonelites"

"For intellectual and spiritual support and reinforcement, parents will want to read THE FAMILY: AMERICA'S HOPE.

. . . it will lift your spirits and strengthen your determination to fulfill the role you and God have undertaken together: that of being the best parents you can possibly be in spite of the designs of those who would destroy the foundation of Western civilization."
—*The Barbara M. Morris Report*



Speeches presented at a national conference by:
Michael Novak • James Hitchcock
Archbishop Nicholas T. Elko • Harold M. Voth
Mayer Eisenstein • Joe J. Christensen
Harold O.J. Brown • Leopold Tyrmand
John A. Howard

The FAMILY
America's Hope

Send check payable to:
The Rockford Institute
934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103

Order *THE FAMILY: AMERICA'S HOPE* today and we'll send you a bonus copy of Allan C. Carlson's "The Family in America, 1982."

☐ Payment enclosed ($4.00 plus 50¢ postage)
☐ Bill me

NORF1

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

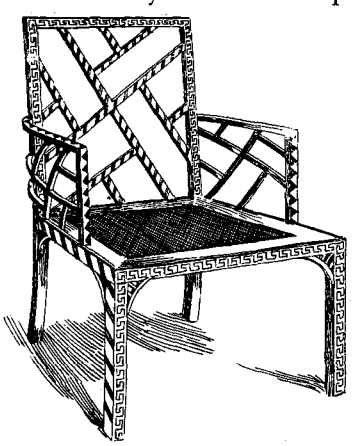
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for millennia. But the policy he advocates for racially proportioning the world actually redresses or resolves nothing. In fact, it further suppresses the problem he ostensibly wishes to keep in the foreground as a piece of austere political realism, namely, the problem of "elites," to say nothing of the genuine problem of justice. The answers to these problems, he apparently assumes, are provided by the "revival" of political theory. As for "political realism," Germino implies that if existing elites will only adopt his policy now and alter themselves "for a time" in redressing the injustices of the past, then the future, in the hands of the new "open" elites, will take care of itself.

We can now see why Professor Germino claims that the Voegelinian revival of political theory as highlighted by him is best seen as a "new phase in the development of liberalism." Or, rather, as he admits, "a form of liberalism," and, as such, merely one form of liberalism among others. The new open liberalism derived from Voegelin is theocentric where the old closed liberalism derived from Hobbes or Locke is anthropocentric, and it is positive rather than negative, following T. H. Green rather than the classical liberals, in its conception of freedom. It thus corrects and completes what Hobbes began. According to Professor Germino: "Welfare state liberalism, from the New Deal onwards, has done much to correct" the old negativity in the United States already. But because it limited itself too much to material considerations, New Deal liberalism did not go far enough in the direction of the true welfare state. As directed by the new liberal theorist, "the open liberalism of the future will have to involve itself far more immediately and directly than ever before with providing richer cultural opportunities to increasing members of people."

The political theorist as "revived" or "highlighted" by Germino thus represents the true vanguard of the worldly society, leading not into the postrevolutionary socialist future, of course, but into the "post-modern" symbolic society. In this as in other things the doctrine of the "open society" as set up by Professor Germino reminds one of nothing so much as the "Open System" as set up by Ernst Bloch. The stance of Germino, or of Voegelin as interpreted by Germino, is to everyday liberalism as that of Bloch is to everyday Marxism. Germino takes his orientation from Voegelin because, according to him, "it is Voegelin who has done most to reintroduce the reality of the spiritual dimension into contemporary discussion of politics and the open society." Voegelin, says Professor Germino, is "among the great mystic-philosophers," for he insists that "theophanic experiences are authoritative in terms of illumining the structure of reality," including, doubtless, the structure of regimes. The great modern regimes are not founded upon such experiences, however, which gives a character of unreality or of the evasion of reality in the public life and affairs of our times, and which, therefore, makes the Voegelinian "revival" of political theory momentous.

Ultimately, "openness is a moment of metaphysical insight." Thus, for Professor Germino, the momentous crisis of our time, i.e., of contemporary political philosophy and hence of contemporary politics, is at length traceable to a derailment of Western metaphysics. The derailment of metaphysics has led to positivism. To demonstrate the poverty of positivism, Germino defers to other texts and dwells mainly on the fact that positivism denies or is unresponsive to the "eschatological dimension of reality." Like Marxism, it is closed to an essential feature of human life and therefore it essentially distorts human life. Professor Germino asserts that not merely the positivistic theories but "all previous political philosophy has been burdened with a limited horizon." In other words, all previous political philosophy has been closed. Myth, on the other hand, is itself "a mode of openness"; there are only closed interpretations of myths. Professor Germino's ultimate thesis can be formulated by saying that in order to cast off the burden of all previous political philosophy we must avoid any closed interpretation of the open society.



It is this conception which, although it could seem merely to reduce politics to ritual and political philosophy to myth in its attempt to resolve the crisis of political theory through symbology, according to Germino represents the very threshold not of the rebirth but of the birth itself of true political philosophy. "From the perspective of the open society," he says, "politics itself takes on a new meaning." This newly discovered meaning of politics is lacking in all previous political philosophy because all previous political philosophy was closed to politics as understood in the perspective of the open society. Hence the attempt to revive political philosophy leads to the discovery that political philosophy has never existed. "In fact, it may be argued that . . . political philosophy has yet to begin," even now.

Clearing the way for this beginning is the task of *Political Philosophy and the Open Society.* The author does not present the new, true political philosophy here. He winningly insists that for him to do so would be immodest. With the help of others, no doubt, it will emerge in the future. In highlighting Voegelin's contributions he is merely preparing the way for it; i.e., Germino is the midwife. However, the professor's midwifery seems less likely to promote political theory than to "make a thought miscarry." While openness—"openness toward the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

transcendental ground," toward the experience of theophany, the "peak experiences" which nourish "self-actualization" —is necessary for the existence of political philosophy, it is not and has never been *sufficient* for it because it provides no self-knowledge. One may in such openness arrive unwittingly at the experience of tumidity, as Longinus observes, or mere self-inflation, without ever arriving at knowledge or "science," still less "political science." It is very difficult to distinguish these experiences, Longinus teaches, although it is necessary to do so, for they are not distinguished by the experiences themselves. One may be carried away by God knows what kind of postulations and "discoveries."

Professor Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's *For Love of the World* is thoroughly documented, intelligently written, and carefully detailed—as well as very long, indulgent, and blandly opinionated throughout. The book is tacitly based on the notion that as complete and devoted a description as possible of the selected activities and affairs of Hannah Arendt will convey something about the present world or "our dark times" or the "human condition"—or Hannah Arendt—that Arendt's own writings lack. The result is something like an entertaining plot outline of a *Hamlet* without the Prince but with some of the hisses and applause. Devoted to the idea of Hannah Arendt, or to the effects of that idea, it does not do justice to the ideas of Hannah Arendt.

Hannah Arendt, no less than Eric Voegelin, is concerned with "events." Events have consequences. Indeed, in Hannah Arendt's view, it seems that Western civilization has been overtaken by events. "Not ideas but events change the world." She begins her account of these events and, therewith, of the change or end of the Western tradition not as Voegelin did, with the derailment in metaphysics of the experience of the divine and its illumination, however, but with the shock of the experience of evil and its darkness—not the darkness of the so-called "Dark Ages" but the "radical" "darkness of our time"—that is, with the "experience of totalitarianism." "Totalitarian domination as an established fact . . . has broken the continuity of Occidental history." With it, "the thread of tradition finally broke." The Western tradition has "lost its anchorage, its beginning and its principle, and is cut adrift." Hannah Arendt, therefore, determined to make a new and original beginning, if not according to her own doctrine of "action" at least in speech. Here, as Voegelin himself pointed out in his famous review of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, her beginning seems to imply a traditional or theological way of proceeding, since only good of some sort could recognize "radical" or "absolute" evil as such. Hence, what Arendt called in another context the traditional Western "conceptual framework of values" remains essentially intact in her own new beginning in speech. Within this framework it appears to Hannah Arendt that the emergence of totalitarianism in Germany and Russia broke the continuity of Occidental history because, in her terms, it is "something entirely new" and "original." To understand it, to resist and master this central event of our times, we must begin anew with every single thing and again seek its specific human meaning or use.

For this it is necessary to understand anew what it means to be human. Hannah Arendt presents this new beginning in *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man.* To be human is to be conditioned: for Hannah Arendt this is the human condition. The human condition is a political condition: "All aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics." The central dilemmas facing modern man, however original they may be, are thus somehow political dilemmas. To gain the new understanding of politics made necessary by these dilemmas, it appears that we must first understand that the continuity of Western thought was "not lost because of historical circumstances and the adversity of reality but because no tradition had foreseen the appearance of totalitarianism or its reality." In other words, the problem of traditional thought does not lie in totalitarianism after all. The originality of totalitarianism only shows it up. The problem is somewhere behind and before the original event of totalitarianism. This is the meaning of Hannah Arendt's description of the contemporary intellectual dilemma as "thinking without bannisters" as unanchored thought struggles toward understanding of the new and the lost.

The heart of Arendt's conception of politics is what we still with some justification regard as the Carlylean vision of the public hero. Her glorification of "pure politics" disdains the mere "administration of things," in Engel's language, and, finally, is impatient even with the everyday phenomena with which, following Heidegger, she began. At times she seems equally indignant toward totalitarian or antibourgeois doctrine, which blots out the public, and toward the bourgeoisie, who do not rise to it, as though they are for all practical purposes equal. Rather, she loves the novel. She seeks the exaggerated heroic polis in which "the extraordinary becomes the ordinary," as in epic or tragedy. In so doing, she imposes quite literal demands upon political life far beyond any made by Plato, except as a dream, or by Aristotle or by the original Western tradition of political thought. She distorts politics.

Dr. Young-Bruehl, a pupil of Professor Arendt and a novelist, presents her story with unobtrusive discipulor piety. The writer is her teacher's student, however, and in reading judgments like: "Her [Arendt's] estimate of McCarthy's power over the Hindenburg of his day, Eisenhower, was exaggerated," one hardly knows whose exaggeration is which. Yet in the end, it perhaps matters little that she presents her subject as more smooth and coherent than was the case. The work becomes more edifying in this way. For in her description of the flame of thought, she cannot help reminding us that understanding is necessary for judgment—today, no less than it ever was. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

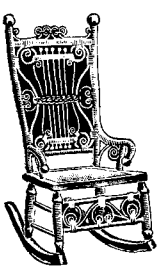
COMMENDABLES

Life in the Happy Lane

William F. Buckley, Jr.: *Overdrive: A Personal Documentary;* Doubleday; New York.

William Buckley is the premier raconteur of the American middle level of letters. He is erudite and sophisticated enough to be accepted by everybody (danger!), possesses the communicative talents to move easily from ideology to spy fiction, and is felicitously able to gather friends from every corner of the cultural spectrum (more danger!). Through his physical and spiritual profile, he also approaches a notion that seems to have disappeared from the vocabulary of the sociocultural ethos during the last decades—that of a gentleman. His existential and psychomoral predispositions seem to make him yearn for exactly this kind of denomination, to lift the word and the notion from the status of polite form, to revive its sociocultural contents and reendorse it with updated and refurbished substances. Unfortunately, it's here where the trouble begins.

In the cultural fashions of a not-too-remote past, the noun *gentleman,* as applied to a specific individual, used to have qualities and connotations that could be linked to other precisely defined substantives. Gentleman-farmer, a time-honored indication, meant a man of means, manners, and education who chose to garden, or to cultivate hogs, for pleasure; or one who chose to tend an inherited piece of arable land in spite of worldly lures; or just a farmer whose civic merits elevated him to gentility. A gentleman-scholar, a venerable avocation, needs no explanation; it can be extended to the species of gentleman-scientist, gentleman-poet, even a gentleman-civil engineer or physician, though an attempt to hyphenate the term, *gentleman* with *lawyer* seems a little risky, or inappropriate, even if history does owe a great deal to brilliant and virtuous lawyers. It would appear urgently necessary in this era to explore two other variations: if we could construct a positive juncture between "gentleman" and "intellectual," or "gentleman" and "entrepreneur," and mold them into our vibrant reality, we might rest much more easily about the fate and future of Western civilization.



Yet, some terms, messages, and images get hopelessly bemuddled if we try to juxtapose words like "gentleman" and "celebrity," or coin something like "gentleman-swinger," "gentleman-jetsetter," or "gentleman-everybody's pal." What seems even more incongruous, in a subtle way at least, is gentlemanliness subjected to saturation with unbounded, exuberant energy and an almost unlimited chumminess with anything on earth. Such bonhomie may result in many attitudes, the worthiest of which seem to be a noble Franciscan disposition. But a gentleman deprived of delicately contoured predicaments and torments which would attest to his sense of life's and the world's heterogeneity and opacity, to his inclinations for musing on perplexities, and to his awareness of the unavoidability of hard, even sacrificial choices, somehow impairs his own nature. An imperative, even precondition, of gentlemanliness seems to be a firmness of convictions and thoughtful but robust sympathies and antipathies. A gentleman must know that some principles and values are better than others and that his own must be constantly, humbly, and cautiously scrutinized. Yet, he must also believe in their higher quality in the realm of values and principles. Above all, however, he must find his proper distance from the bearers of other principles and values, regardless of how brilliant *causeurs* and endearing buddies they are and how much they can command his attention, even respect. *Tout comprendre* is advisable for a gentleman, but *tout pardonner* impoverishes somewhat his gentlemanly substance.

Mr. Buckley's *Personal Documentary* stresses a kind of existential fulfillment that looks quite appealing and laudable to us. Any clues to some more refined dilemmas, inner divagations, or even satisfactions, are less clear in it. He is a man of many virtues and supposedly—like each of us—of some inevitable, discreet, and maybe venial sins, of which we learn less. This facet of his intimations pushes him slightly *du côté de* Fonda, Jagger, Stallone, and Garfield. He titles his book *Overdrive,* a metaphor for dynamics; as his previous autobiographical tome was entitled *Cruising Speed,* a sort of transportation symbolism makes itself felt. If Ms. Gurley Brown didn't already have her blood-red fingernails hooked into it, the most precise adjective for either of his books could be *Cosmopolitan.* This, however, would clash disturbingly with Mr. Buckley's own political heraldry which proudly sports *National* on his emblem. Therefore, *Grand Tour* may be more correct. He is no conservative outcast looking longingly in; he is noshing with the best of them, no matter where they are found. A dictionarylike definition is inserted into *Overdrive* that explains the title term: "an automotive transmission gear which transmits to the propeller shaft a speed greater than engine speed." What it doesn't say is that an overdrive provides more miles with less gas.

Mr. Buckley is our compatriot, comrade, ally, perhaps even a friend—though the last circumstance makes us a bit wistful as we often ask ourselves: How is it that our friend has so many kind words for those whom *we* would never consider friends? Does he genuinely like and respect them or only pretend to?

Both possibilities tend to give us a bit of an ideological headache. □

Real Fiction

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan: *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics;* Methuen; New York.

There is a proliferation of texts out there. Printing presses are disgorging new titles—conventional books, instant books, magazines, quarterlies, irregularlies, newspapers, pamphlets, etc.—at computer-powered speeds. And what already exists remains, often buried, but only to be unearthed by industrious archaeologists who have to do something to keep themselves occupied. Additionally, there is another quantitative change looming its several avant-garde hydra heads over the distant horizon: those who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

once confined themselves to the study of narrative fictions (e.g., novels, novellas, short stories) may find themselves having to deal with what appears to be critical essays as these writings, some claim, are also fictions. It's enough to make one want to turn to the study of glyphs—ancient ones, that is.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan offers hope—and some workable definitions—in her *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics.* The subtitle is important. This is no rearguard action, no ostrich approach to reading. She is aware of what is going on. Rimmon-Kenan boldly states that her book "does not offer an original theory" (bold because nowadays even the most hackneyed expressions are passed as fresh insights) but, rather, draws on Anglo-American New Criticism, Russian Formalism, French Structuralism, the Tel Aviv School of Poetics, and the Phenomenology of Reading. It is, in a sense, a synthetic work—but not polyester, nor is it flashy ultrasuede.

Rimmon-Kenan defines *narrative fiction* as "the narration of a succession of fictional events." That is no mere tautology. Moreover, in this era, when seemingly nothing can be defined without an escape clause, it is no less than breathtaking, especially as she stoutly delves deeper into the designation and description of the various classifications that can be used to put fiction in one spot and history, journalism, autobiography, etc. in others. She states that there are three aspects of a narrative fiction. One is *story:* this is what is said in the fiction, as opposed to how it is said. For example, if one were to tell another person what a novel is about, he would undoubtedly give details in chronological order and leave out most of the supporting details. Otherwise, he would end up being like Borges's Pierre Menard. Another is *text:* "Whereas 'story' is a succession of events, 'text' is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling." The text is the document. Why people should treat *text* as if it is a Derridian dirty word is puzzling. Finally, there is *narration:* there is someone or something that creates the discourse; he/it narrates, produces the text, generates the narration. And from these three come many.

Essentially, Rimmon-Kenan offers tools with which to manage the inexorable march of the Word: glasses to see more clearly, a machete to clear away foliage, a shovel to put some things where they belong. Of course, these implements must be properly employed. Otherwise, one may look through the wrong portion of the lenses, trip, cut off a leg, and fall into a self-made hole. □

Stunning Scrimshaw

Herman Melville: *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale;* University of California Press; Berkeley.

Certainly one of the "great American novels" is *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale.* People ordinarily forget the hyphen. It's not even used in Leslie Fiedler's *What Was Literature?,* which makes us shudder, considering the professor's seeming omniscience in matters concerning American literature. And there are probably few on either side of the ivy-covered walls who recognize the balance of the title. Somehow, our minds work so that memory contains, to a large extent, matters of convenience: *Moby Dick* is good enough. Other aspects of the novel are often forgotten or not learned. For example, the "great American" book was initially published in 1851—in London. As *The Whale.* Harper and Brothers, of New York, brought it out the same year with the expanded title.

Novelists today are typically wealthy celebrities—at least those authors that most people recognize are figures who can be on *The Tonight Show* along with talking birds, blubbering personalities, and Borscht-Belt comedians. Vast numbers of writers are not so lucky and must do other things—from menial tasks to white collaring—to stay in office supplies, to say nothing of eating (splurging means McDonald's, not Elaine's). There are undoubtedly thousands of young people in this country who had to read an abridged version of *Moby-Dick* (or who skipped the reading and watched Gregory Peck working out John Huston and Ray Bradbury's screenplay) and who think that Herman Melville was something of a 19th-century John Irving—after all, they're both East Coasters with books in celluloid. Actually, Melville was one digit in the beforementioned vast numbers; he belongs to that group of American writers whose fame and critical success are postmortem matters. Indeed, Melville completed *Billy Budd, Sailor* after retirement from a post as a New York customs officer (try to imagine Norman Mailer *working*) and before his death in 1891, yet the book didn't see print until 1924.

Nowadays, groups that were somehow wronged in the past are asking for, and often receiving, restitution. Herman Melville is finally getting his due. In 1979 the Arion Press of San Francisco brought out an edition of *Moby-Dick* created by Andrew Hoyem. It was set by hand and printed on dampened handmade paper by a platen letterpress. Chapters are opened with specially designed capital letters in a face named Leviathan. One hundred illustrations, engraved on end-grain boxwood by Barry Moser, are featured. The original publication was limited to 265 copies. The original price was $1000. Great works deserve such treatment. However, the special volume was, perforce, out of general currency—in fact, it was never in it. Fortunately, the University of California Press has brought out a populist version of the Arion volume, one in the conventional trade paperback format. It is visually appealing and inviting. It should draw more readers to one of the select few novels that Americans should be proud of, one that they should know. □

IN FOCUS

Red-Eye Express

Timothy Leary: *Flashbacks: An Autobiography;* Houghton Mifflin/Tarcher; Boston.

by Richard de Mille

In February my fellow former-psychologist and 60's-survivor Timothy Leary phoned to say he'd like to send me his autobiography. I agreed. He said I'd be amused by his "send-up" of Carlos Castaneda's visit to the psychedelic training center at the Hotel Catalina in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, in 1963. I thought I would be. He sent the book. I *was* amused, but I could see that Castaneda's visit was imaginary, derived as it was from a book of mine Leary had raved

Mr. de Mille's books include The Don Juan Papers, *an exposé of Carlos Castaneda.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about two years earlier in the *Lone Star Review.* I read the remainder of the autobiography with one eyebrow raised.

Though I have been curious about its subjective effects, I have never used LSD or any similar substance, and for years I thought LSD had scrambled Leary's brain. Now I see that what is wrong with him is not brain damage and did not begin with drugs. It began in childhood, when his hero and model was an irresponsible, drunken, O'Neilian father and his governesses were a long-suffering mother and a straitlaced aunt. Apparently the only order he ever willingly obeyed was his grandfather's advice to a boy of ten: "Never do anything like anyone else." Leary rebelled against mother, aunt, Pope, school, West Point, colleges, institutions, and standards. He became a total outsider, a radical idealist, permanently unimpressed by rules, forever unmoored from tradition. His understanding of man and the world, though clinically sane, is so willfully tendentious as to be utterly ridiculous—as well as hazardous to anyone who shares it.

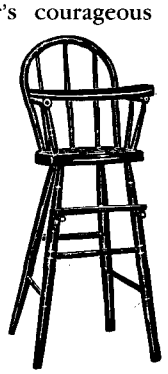
Leary's silliness is monumental. While claiming to be a scientist, he ignores the limitations of science and misuses technical terms to propagate illusions. He says his brain was permanently damaged by reading *Ulysses,* which sounds like a joke until he says also that taking LSD is doing "neurological fieldwork." He says eight circuits of the brain are hard-wired to modulate eight stages of evolution in each person. He says science can answer eight basic questions about "human destiny" which religion and philosophy have failed to answer. He is working for intellectual evolution through psychoactive drugs, for space migrations, and for the indefinite postponement of death—which he will surely need if he is ever going to get himself straightened out.

Leary is, in his peculiar way, an honest, authentic reporter: authentic because he lived through and publicly personified the drug explosion, honest because he wishes to tell the truth about his life. Leary's conception of truth is thematic: he prepares a narrative in which certain details may be invented by him but all conform to the meanings of events and relationships as he understands them. This unfortunate technique, called novelistic reporting, is currently popular with second-rate publishers. It destroys Leary's book as history though not as confession or self-portrait. The man we meet has wasted his life and wants us to emulate him. As wisdom or science *Flashbacks* is a pipe dream; as a case study written by the afflicted it is an authentic, useful source document. □

Of Clerics and Cults

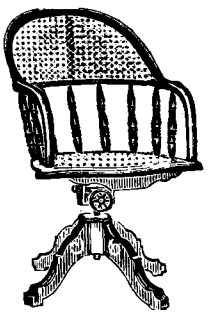
Richard Quebedeaux: *By What Authority: The Rise of Personality Cults in American Christianity;* Harper & Row; New York.

"Here I stand. I will go no further." So declared a resolutely defiant Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms when defending the 95 theses he had nailed to the door of the Wittenburg Cathedral. Luther's courageous words,



spoken at a time when the Church was still burning heretics, have frequently been remembered in 1983, the 500th anniversary of his birth. Were Luther alive today to survey Protestant America, he would probably be disappointed by the conferences convened in his memory and would likely agree with Richard Quebedeaux's contention that modern Western religion is in a "crisis of authority and superficiality." Though Catholic theologians have long since conceded the justice of Luther's attacks on ecclesiastical laxity towards sin, especially in the sale of indulgences, many Protestant leaders now pretend that no such thing as sin exists, except perhaps in missile silos. Certainly few of them are standing stock-still in conviction; rather, they are agilely dancing to the tune of the latest political, psychological, or cultural doctrine. Trendy but faithless social activists thus minister to the elite, while vapid sloganeers and media celebrities satisfy the masses. In all likelihood, Luther, who produced one of the first translations of the Bible for the laity, would be outraged at the way the clergy now either ignore it or reduce it to deceptive clichés.

Nonetheless, Quebedeaux is right in asserting that these current problems "can be traced all the way back to the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation." By defining Scripture itself as the basis for ministerial authority while at the same time giving it to everyone, Luther made the question of religious authority deeply problematic. Indeed, the doctrinal combination of *sola Scriptura* and "the priesthood of all believers" made inevitable the endless schisms of the hundreds of Protestant denominations, all "Bible-based," but each interpreting the sacred text differently. Writing in 1682, John Dryden wondered which was worse: a Church which "cheated on record" as it "parcell'd out the Bible by retail" or "a thousand daily sects" in which the Bible was at "the mercy of the rabble lay"? After the Higher Criticism further delegitimated the ministry among intellectuals, the new illiteracy born of educational decline and television made it easy for Bible-toting charlatans to win



popular audiences without doctrinal rigor. *Sola Scriptura* has consequently often become *sola Personalitas, solus Popularis,* or *solus Politicus.*

Nor is a return to Rome as likely now to satisfy those seeking meaningful religious authority as in Dryden's day. Especially since Vatican II, which began what Quebedeaux calls "the 'Protestantization' of Catholicism," the Catholic Church has appeared increasingly unsure of its claims to authority (not traditionally dependent on Scripture alone) and powerless to enforce orthodoxy among its members, or even its priests and teachers. While a conservative pope claims the keys of Peter, he seems largely unable to lock Marxist priests, prolesbian nuns, and relativist theologians out of official positions.

Quebedeaux argues that society needs new, heroic religious leaders who will inspire the type of sacrifice and discipline that "the idealistic young" are finding in the new cults from the Orient. As a teacher at the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church seminary, Quebedeaux has a vested interest in this thesis (although he never openly avows his Unification ties in the book). Because the Unification Church denies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christ's unique saviorship, Martin Luther would surely have vigorously opposed it, and no living Christian can be happy to see it gaining adherents among young Americans. So long, however, as those who claim authority from the Christian Messiah are so ineffectual and superficial in exercising it, the new messiahs from the Far East will find *their* fields white already to harvest. (BC) □

Faltering Christian Soldiers

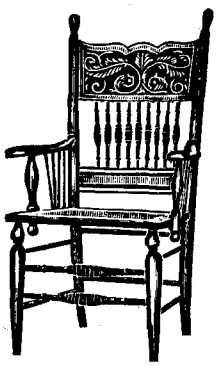
***Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America;* Edited by Mark A. Noll et al.;** William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.

***A Documentary History of Religion in America;* Edited by Edwin S. Gaustad;** William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids.

Eerdmans justly enjoys a reputation as one of America's leading Christian publishers; however, as modern Christianity itself becomes increasingly fragmented and secularized, publishing books that try to represent the whole of it, as these two volumes do, becomes increasingly problematic. Though the United States has never been united by a single communion or creed, until quite recently it did enjoy near unanimity on such fundamental doctrines as the Fatherhood of God and on the universal applicability of the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments. "We are a Christian people," affirmed the Supreme Court in 1931. As these two works show, that spiritual consensus is crumbling. Now mention of God the Father brings anathemas from feminist theologians, while leading ministers refuse to "impose" any values—even those from the top of Sinai—on anyone.

A few of the contributors to *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America* are disturbed by the spiritual disintegration of the nation: one writer laments that in the 60's the churches "took up the chorus of selfism"; another perceives that modern "rights" activists have typically had "no theology at all." But many of them laud the new "liberation" movements, "the new pluralism" with its "moving away from an emphasis on the differences between Christianity and the alternative faiths," and the leftist polemics of the National and World Councils of Churches. They thus evince as much concern about the decline of Christianity as Nero showed for the burning of Rome.

In the second volume of *A Documentary History of Religion in America,* Edwin S. Gaustad seeks "to offer enough balance . . . for virtually every taste." He does, fortunately, include the bracingly conservative theological protest against "captivity to the prevailing thought structures" formulated in 1975 at Hartford under the leadership of the Rev. Richard Neuhaus and sociologist Peter Berger. He also anthologizes this



perceptive observation by George Santayana:

> As to modernism, it is suicide. It is the last of the concessions to the spirit of the world which half-believers and double-minded prophets have always been found making; but it is a mortal concession. It concedes everything; for it concedes that everything in Christianity, as Christians hold it, is an illusion.

Although he can quote Santayana, Gaustad does not seem able to learn from him: in his overall selection of documents and in his commentary on the Moral Majority, on feminism, and on the no-nukes movement, he reveals a decidedly modern liberal bias. The introduction to a pastoral letter from a Catholic bishop "withholding 50 percent of my income tax as a means of protesting our nation's continuing involvement in the race for nuclear arms supremacy" (the last document in the collection) is almost adulatory. Half-believers of the sort Eerdmans now seems willing to let edit and write their books may share the fashionable illusion that denying Caesar half of his due is a valid act of contemporary worship. True Christians who know that this concedes to Soviet atheists the right to abolish every Western congregation will recognize that, like other forms of modernism, it is suicide. (BC). □

At the Abyss

Sidney D. Drell: *Facing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons;* University of Washington Press; Seattle.

Although a world safe from nuclear destruction is an ideal that all civilized people should pray for, as a practical matter, it is an impossibility. Nuclear weapons exist and will continue to do so until the time that (a) they have been used and so only rubble remains or (b) they have been replaced by more potent forces. This is not the City of God—at least, yet. Of late, there has been a great deal of attention focused upon the proliferation of these weapons. This attention, as it inevitably happens, has consolidated itself into a movement: the nuclear-freeze movement. Whether the participants in that campaign are well-meaning individuals or dupes is essentially of little concern. There is a more fundamental consideration: the question of freedom. Freedom is a fundamental of civilized existence. In the U.S. people are able to organize themselves, march, shout, publish articles, etc. That's obvious; everyone in the U.S. takes it for granted. But the other power doesn't believe in values like freedom. It concerns itself with coercion, brutality, violence, and other topics that even the animal kingdom has evolved beyond. Every day, it seems, there are reports that severe prison overcrowding exists in the U.S. No such reports come from the Soviet Union: the gulag knows no bounds.

Sidney D. Drell is a theoretical physicist and he has been an adviser to the U.S. government on matters of national security and arms control for more than two decades. He is clearly a knowledgeable man. In *Facing the Threat of Nuclear War* he sets forth a number of proposals that he believes and thinks will reduce the possibility of a nuclear war. The items are sensible—or would be if all things were equal. But they are not. Can thugs be reasoned with? Can free people openly trust those beings which viciously annihilated the lives of 269 persons who happened to be aboard an unarmed, lumbering passenger plane that erred into the wrong geography? Metaphors of inhumane being fail before the reality of the foe.

The value of the text comes from an appended open letter written by Andrei Sakharov, wherein he states that his and Drell's points of view coincide in believing that a large nuclear war is nothing more than "collective suicide." The difference be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tween the approaches of the two men is that Dr. Drell posits a gentlemanly enemy while Dr. Sakharov works with the actual given. He not only knows and understands it, but he has intimately experienced some of its cruelty. While fully acknowledging the desire for peace, Dr. Sakharov warns against easy solutions: "Objective reality is much more complicated and far from anything so simple." He sensibly maintains that in order for the U.S. to deal with the U.S.S.R. it must do so from a point of strength. This means that if the Soviets build missiles and the U.S. doesn't, then there is no reason why the Soviets would pay any attention to the U.S. And while Dr. Sakharov does want a reduction in nuclear arms, he also understands that conventional weapons and soldiers must be there to replace them. Do any placards in nuclear-freeze marches speak of this necessity?

In the near-term, the U.S. must bolster its conventional forces and stay current with regard to nuclear weaponry. But it won't be a simple thing to do. A long passage from Dr. Sakharov must be quoted here:

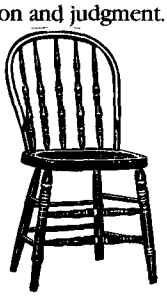
> The restoration of strategic parity is only possible by investing large resources and by an essential change in the psychological atmosphere in the West. There must be a readiness to make certain limited economic sacrifices and, most important, an understanding of the seriousness of the situation and of the necessity for some restructuring. In the final analysis, this is necessary to prevent nuclear war, and war in general.

The question is, of course, whether or not we will do it. The possible—perhaps probable—consequences of not making those changes include not only the deaths of hundreds of millions, but also a reduction of oxygen in the atmosphere, various epidemics of known and unknown diseases, and a general collapse of all that is taken for granted. Dr. Sakharov says, "even if mankind were able to preserve itself as a social body, which seems highly unlikely, the most important social institutions —the foundation of civilization —would be destroyed." Should *we* desire to preserve that foundation—as it doesn't seem that our enemy is too concerned with matters related to civilization—then we must be both pacific *and* strong. □

Conservative Imagination

Sarah Bradford: *Disraeli;* Stein & Day; New York.

Benjamin Disraeli and John Henry Cardinal Newman are credited with bringing intriguing imponderables into the syndrome of conservative philosophies. Theirs was, in Russell Kirk's phrase, "conservatism of imagination," a rather vague category of cognition and judgment. In fact,



Disraeli's historical image is deceptively coherent, definable, even simple: he's perceived as an astute statesman, dedicated to achieving goals of a political and practical nature. Yet, it has slowly begun to dawn on many that he was not just a master politician, parliamentarian, foreign-policy strategist, and tactician of sociopolitical movements. It is now clear that he was, first and foremost, a seminal thinker, an ideological conceptualist whose world view and philosophy—which are often not attributed to him—are today the sources of many modern conservative theories and principles. A direct lifeline of ideas seems to connect Disraeli, Churchill, and Margaret Thatcher —that is, leaders whose main concern was (is) to make truths that appeared paramount and undeniable to them palatable to the masses of voters. In other words, their common trait seems to be an ability to connect the lasting historical validity of post-Burkean conservatism with the democratic legitimacy of the political process. Whether Ms. Bradford's book adequately addresses Disraeli's ideological and intellectual legacy is debatable. But her work proves that interest in Lord Beaconsfield's persona and influence is flourishing. □

Westward Directions

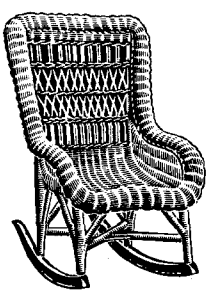
***Our Country and Our Culture;* Edited by Steven C. Munson;** The Orwell Press; New York.

The westward expansion from Europe in the 15th century culminated, obviously, in the creation of America. Regardless of their motives—profit, escape, freedom—the people who built this country had to struggle. Nowadays, struggles are defined as merging onto an expressway at rush hour and as opening stubborn pickle jars. Moral fiber is out; granola fiber is in. Things have become so easy that the artists, writers, teachers, and others who help shape and maintain our cultural environment are showing themselves to be increasingly inept at performing those sacred (an "out" adjective, we know) tasks. "Anything goes," they intone, ignoring the consequences. Calling them to task for their negligence and sloppiness was one of the functions performed in an illuminating Committee for the Free World symposium, the proceedings of which are collected here. □

Perceptibles

Marion Montgomery: *Why Poe Drank Liquor;* Volume II of *The Prophetic Poet and the Spirit of the Age;* Sherwood Sugden; La Salle, IL.

In one of Edgar Allen Poe's better-known stories, "The Pit and the Pendulum," a victim of the Spanish Inquisition narrowly escapes death when strapped to a board while a pendulum swings a knife across his body. Poe himself is strapped down in Marion Montgomery's *Why Poe Drank Liquor,* while scholarly knives slice into him and his work. Dissecting Poe's life and writings, Dr. Montgomery discovers the reasons for a dismal life and a morbid art in the bankrupt spirituality of modern gnosticism. That Poe is guilty of such heresy, Dr. Montgomery proves beyond question by drawing upon his deep philosophical erudition in Aquinas, Heidegger, Bergson, Maritain, Voegelin, and Kirkegaard and upon his intimate literary appreciation of Eliot, Dante, Faulkner, and O'Connor. Nonetheless, since to some it may be hard to resist Yvor Winters's conclusion that Poe belongs merely in the second rank of writers, the reader may wonder if he deserves such a long time on the board beneath such ponderous blades. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WASTE OF MONEY

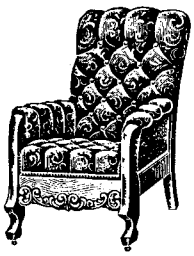
Self-Actualizing Mammon

Mary Lutyens: *Krishnamurti: The Years of Fulfillment;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

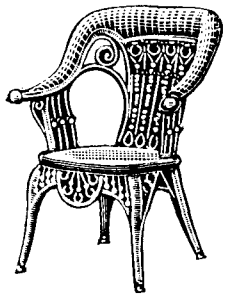
by Steven Hayward

A few hundred yards up from where Sunset Boulevard meets the Pacific Ocean in southern California sits the "Self-Realization Fellowship Lakeshore Shrine." The "Shrine," which has all the authenticity of a prefab Levittown mosque, is the perfect metaphor for southern California spirituality: a convenient midday stop between morning aerobics class in Malibu and the afternoon session with the analyst in Beverly Hills.

The Eastern-mystic swami business is booming in California. Jiddu Krishnamurti has been making a good living at it for over 50 years now. He seems to be India's answer to Jesse Jackson, shuttling back and forth from California to India—the ostensible source of all true spirituality—and giving



"talks" everywhere in between. It's a rough life spreading the modern gospel of inner transformation. Krishnamurti, who has



renounced all worldly possessions, has had to hole up in villas in Malibu and Big Sur, country estates in England, châteaus in France and Switzerland, and haciendas in South America. His nonprofit Krishnamurti foundation maintains a 100-acre headquarters in Ojai and sponsors his entourage for his worldwide junkets.

He's succeeded in fooling the usual people. "He has renounced more than any man I can think of," said Henry Miller, "except the Christ." Miller did not lack company. Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, Robinson Jeffers, Lincoln Steffens, and George Bernard Shaw were all captivated by this "master of reality."

The spiritual "reality" that Krishnamurti promotes is well adapted to modern American trends. (He wears traditional robes in India, tweeds and turtlenecks in the U.S.) Historical Eastern mysticism is rooted in pantheism. While somewhat amorphous to the Western mind, at least God has an objective existence in nature. But in Californian mysticism, God is located solely in the self. In other words, one can have spirituality without God by way of "self-realization." But as the abstract "self" cannot achieve intrinsic identity apart from relation to something else, the content of "self-realization" teachings is mostly soporific cant. This book is no different. Most of it runs like this: "The salient points were that truth, liberation or God, whatever you choose to call it, could not be found through the intellect or through experience. Truth was the release of the mind from all the burdens of memory." The burdens of memory? Well, perhaps remembering Krishnamurti is a burden. The most memorable moment in his life occurred in 1926, when Will Rogers dismissed him as "the amateur messiah from India." □

Mr. Hayward is a student at Claremont Graduate School in California.

Of Sonnets and Slogans

Faith Berry: *Langston Hughes: Before and Beyond Harlem;* Lawrence Hill; Westport, CT.

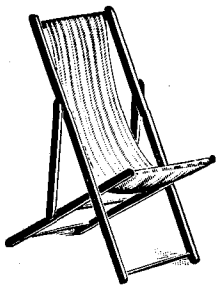
Not a few of the English-speaking world's greatest poets have at times turned their skill to political ends: Dryden, for instance, popularized Tory support for Charles II in his famous "Absalom and Achitophel," while Wordsworth descended into some of his most justly forgotten lines in *Descriptive Sketches* and *Guilt and Sorrow* in fervent support of the principles of the French Revolution. Nor does it seem irrelevant that Dryden's artistic success was in the service of conservatism, while Wordsworth's failure was in praise of revolution. For if verse concerned with politics is to survive as art, it must transcend the innovative ideological causes of the day by expressing timeless truths about man in forms more deftly crafted than the simplistic mottoes spewed out by crusading radicals. Auden doubtless had this in mind when he observed that "poetry makes nothing happen." Consequently, readers who know nothing about the particular political innovation (the Exclusion Bill) that Dryden inveighs against can still fully enjoy his poem as a poem because it masterfully satirizes unchanging human failings, but only those zealously committed to Jacobin ideals can now endure Wordsworth's effusions.

Langston Hughes was the first American black man to make a strictly literary career. As a leader of the Harlem Renaissance, he gave poetic voice to the dynamic spirit, as well as the deep frustration, of his people. Poems like "The Weary Blues," "Stony Lonesome," "Sylvester's Dying Bed," "Dream Boogie," and "Young Gal's Blues," rooted in human realities Hughes knew intimately, are lasting accomplishments. Unfortunately, Hughes produced other poems of more dubious character, ones with titles like "Chant for May Day," "One More

'S' in the U.S.A.," "Revolution," "Red Flag on Tuskeegee," and "Ballad of Lenin." Little but agitprop cant given meter and wide margins, these pieces deserve no more attention than Wordsworth's juvenile ravings. In *Langston Hughes,* however, Faith Berry chooses to glorify these works. The reason is obvious: Miss Berry, who repeatedly quotes Lenin with approbation, loves propaganda more than poetry. She romanticizes the years Hughes spent as an unabashed procommunist, writing for *New Masses* and *Daily Worker* in America and *Izvestia* and other communist publications in Russia, and, incredibly, tries to make Hughes's naive response to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Soviet show trials appear morally and intellectually superior to Arthur Koestler's. She also gratui-



tously apologizes for the disparaging remarks Hughes made about the Soviet Union when he appeared before the McCarthy Committee—as if a regime that murders and imprisons tens of millions of its citizens deserves better.

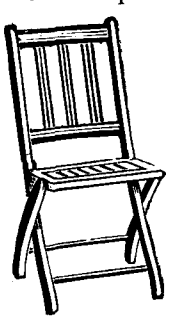
The reason Hughes wrote party-line doggerel was that he agreed, according to Miss Berry, with communist Michael Gold's statement that "poetry must become dangerous again." In *The Gulag Archipelago,* Solzhenitsyn relates the case of a critic imprisoned 15 years for unfavorably comparing a communist poet to Pushkin: he had discovered how communism makes poetry dangerous. (BC) □

Derailed Thinking

Michael Coney: *The Celestial Steam Locomotive: Volume I of The Song of Earth;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

One of the primary comforts of the mass audience is the series. Whether this is manifest in radio shows like *Fibber McGee and Molly* or movies like *Jaws 3-D* or virtually any TV show, the effect is always the same. The listener or viewer *knows* what can be expected: Fibber will evoke some laughs, the big fish will crunch bones. In a world where families are constantly on the move and so without roots—and in which stable family units are becoming precious—the continuity of the series is something that can be depended upon, a virtual security blanket. And when the gently flowing stream is thwarted—such as when *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* broadcast its last—many feel deserted, empty, longing for reruns. Centerless lives cling to marginal impedimenta. This rage for the series is also ubiquitous in the area of science-fiction/fantasy writing. In certain cases, continuity is necessary: Tolkien needed more space to create Middle Earth than a conventionally sized text would allow; the universe of Asimov's original Foundation is a big place and so filled three novels.

Now, however, writers in this genre seem to be pandering to their audience's needs and are skewing the form of their productions to fit the demand. The result is something that has more in common with promotional



strategy than with anything resembling literature. One of the latest in this series of preformed family-and-friend substitutes for the lonely is *The Celestial Steam Locomotive,* a hodgepodge that proudly announces itself as *Volume I of The Song of Earth.* Anyone who wants to figure out merely the time in which the book is set needs a pocket calculator with fresh batteries. If that person wants to unravel the story (assuming that there is one), then he'd better equip himself with a home computer and powerful peripherals. But that's the sort of thing that's now a minor rage, as crossword puzzles once were. Mr. Coney does have an occasional thought-provoking concept—such as what would a world be like when the remaining humans needed to do nothing but sit around and think (presumably not about books like this)—but it is never worked out. Indeed, the significance of the title locomotive left us at the station. The promise is, of course, that all will become clear in a later volume. Hopefully, those volumes will be published on recycled paper, with the first volume used as the pulp. □

Jorge Luis Borges

continued from page 7, column 2

cruel paradoxes and ironies of the human condition without fear or remorse.

There can be no doubt about Borges's political conservatism. Indeed, Borges suggested in an interview with Selden Rodman some 10 years ago that "the only hope for South America as a whole" would be for the U.S. to "conquer it." While speaking to a group of U.S. college students Borges stated, "I am a conservative, I hate the Communists, I hate the Nazis, I hate the anti-Semites." Borges added, "But I don't allow these opinions to find their way into my writing," which substantiates part of Professor Monegal's observation. But how can he be considered a non-avant-garde writer? A number of his observations about writing can be cited: "in the long run, to break the rules, you must know *about* the rules"; "If you are writing in English, you are following a tradition"; "I find it very strange to ignore form." Borges's stories are finely crafted, meticulously executed. He has never written a novel. One reason why is that he feels that even "great novels like *Don Quixote* and *Huckleberry Finn* are virtually shapeless" and his taste is for "economy and a clearly stated beginning, middle, and end." While many modern poets drift aimlessly in print, Borges writes sonnets and other definable forms. He never does something new for the sake of newness; he finds the past serviceable. With regard to form, there can be little doubt about his conservatism. However, Prof. Monegal seems to indicate that Borges could be philosophically aligned with Derrida. Certainly Borges doubts. And he intimately understands the cruelty of man's existence: blindness overtook him when he was elevated to the directorship of the national library in Argentina. Yet, he is affirmative, he thinks and feels that there is purpose in life, though that it may be beyond the understanding of man. He will not stride into the abyss that many modern writers find so appealing; he stands four-square against it while recognizing its existence and probing its parameters. As such, he finds himself among great and true creators of literature who timelessly rediscover the infinity of spiritual and existential confines. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Murdered City

***Mr. Mom;* Directed by Stan Dragoti; Written by John Hughes; 20th-Century Fox.**

Detroit was hit by two blows in the recent past, blows from which it will never fully recover. On the one hand, there was the force of the imports. The other fist delivered a hit that was like one of those thrown by a cartoon character that winds up its arm until it can twist no more. This one was long in coming: technological obsolescence. William Blake would have recognized, for example, the Ford Rouge Plant. While Detroit wasn't devastated by the pommeling, there are a number of people there who are bruised to varying shades of black and blue. Auto workers from virtually all levels—from sweepers to middle-level management—find themselves waiting in long lines at Michigan Employment Security Commission offices. Grocery-store lines grow as the formulas necessary for converting food stamps are enacted in suburban locales wherein food stamps were once curious forms of scrip. Not only are the automakers learning to do more with less, but so too are those who once designed and manufactured the vehicles. Hollywood has gone to Detroit. At least all of the license plates in *Mr. Mom* are from Michigan and the characters say that Detroit is the locale. There's even a brief scene that was shot in an auto plant, at a framing line. These indicators notwithstanding, the Detroit in *Mr. Mom* has nothing to do with reality.

When times are tough, comedy is most salutary. While *Mr. Mom* does evoke a few laughs from sight gags, it is essentially a hurtful movie. The story centers on a young automotive engineer—a husband and father of three small children, all nicely housed in Farmington, Troy, or one of the other middle-management suburbs—who finds himself unemployed: no temporary layoff, he's been fired. Writer John Hughes takes the opportunity to insert a feminist line. The character is initially a nice guy who is preoccupied by his work and so benignly puzzled by family affairs. His wife suggests that since she has a college degree and two year's experience with an ad agency, she'll look for work. The nice guy becomes chauvinist pig and bets her that he'll be back in harness before she can dust off her résumé. From that point on, the movie becomes cruel.

Some of the more amusing strips of *Blondie* comics feature Dagwood in a frilly apron. Dagwood is out of his depth in the kitchen. His domestic incompetence is amusing. In *Mr. Mom,* the automotive engineer is a complete idiot who is unable to wash a load of clothes, shop, cook, vacuum the floor, etc. All he seems capable of doing is wandering around with a bottle of beer. If he is supposed to be typical (i.e., even a gross caricature requires some semblance to reality), then it's a wonder that Detroit didn't totally collapse in the days of the Edsel. Naturally, the wife lands a high-level position at an ad agency and is immediately a hand-holding account executive for the number-one source of billing. Someone should have mentioned to Mr. Hughes that there are hundreds of highly experienced, portfolio-clutching people looking for even entry-level openings in Detroit: when automotive slid, so did the rest, especially ad agencies.

In *Mr. Mom,* the characters live happily ever after. The engineer's ex-boss literally comes in on hands and knees and begs him to return. The wife, who has fended off the advances of her overly libidinous boss (in real life, the ad people tend to be more tired than lusty), decides that she'll continue to work, but elsewhere, and on her own terms. Even this wrap-up is vicious. We can only hope that few of the unemployed in Detroit (or those anywhere else, regardless of their status) have made the mistake of watching a movie that makes *I Love Lucy* reruns look like paragons of sensibility. (SM) □

The Incertitude of Self

***The Return of Martin Guerre;* Directed by Daniel Vigne; Screenplay by Jean-Claude Carriere and Daniel Vigne; a European International Distribution Ltd. release.**

One of the tenets of the semiotics developed by Saussure is that a particular word has significance in a language only in relation to other words in that system. *Dog* means canine whereas *bog, cog, fog,* etc. don't. After all, there's no ultimate justification for that particular appellation. In a similar sense, specific individuals are, in part, given identity through the context of others. Sam is Sam because he is not Bill or Mary. Of course, there's more to identity than that, more to it than mere naming (at least today: in an earlier age, names were powerful, potent). One way that we *know* people, as opposed to *knowing of* them, is through shared experience. Everyone *knows of* countless individuals, and in some cases (e.g., celebrities, historical figures), may have a great deal of stored information about them. But that isn't *knowing.* This matter is put into a more concrete form in the story of Martin Guerre, a true story. It seems.

In the mid-16th century, a teenaged Guerre left his wife, son, and farm to the care of his family. Eight years later, he returned. At least it seems to be Martin: he looks like him, seems to *know* people, recalls events. But then his identity is questioned. He must prove himself to be himself. The only way that it can be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

done is to appeal to those whom he *knows,* and who, presumably, *know* him. "I am Martin, not Pansette," he essentially claims, "for if I were Pansette, I would not be Martin, yet I can only be Martin in order to *know* what I know and for you to *know* me." Indeed, his wife says that she *knows* that he is Martin. Yet still there is doubt. (This may sound implausible, but in a society like the contemporary one, wherein individuals are defined as bits of data on magnetic disks, it is very possible.) Eventually, Martin is shown, beyond a shadow of a doubt, to be someone else.

Jean-Claude Carriere and Daniel Vigne portray this difficult situation in a lucid way. There is obviously cerebration behind the film, an activity rarely performed in Hollywood. It is, admittedly, predictable. And it lacks the ambiguity that would have made it a more engrossing film, something on the order of Kurosawa's *Rashomon.* But they decided to work under the constraints of reality. At least I think they did: there is no way of *knowing.* (SM) □

MUSIC

Power, Passion & Performance

by Robert R. Reilly

Béla Bartók's early music is not well known nor is it often recorded, so it may be surprising for those who have struggled through his string quartets or the dissonance and violence of his *Allegro barbaro* to learn how firmly grounded he was in the 19th century. Sefel Records has released a stunningly recorded digital set of Bartók's albums concentrating on these early works, but also including a superb version of his later *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943). All are conducted by Árpád Joó and played by either the Budapest Symphony Orchestra or the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. *Kossuth* (1903) is a tumultuous, Lisztian tone poem depicting Hungary's unsuccessful 1848 War of Independence from Austria. The dramatic scenario for this piece coincided with the enormous impact Richard Strauss's music had on Bartók when he first heard *Also sprach Zarathustra* in 1902; the combination made for a rousing, highly emotive work. This recording (Sefel SEFD 5005) captures the huge orchestral climaxes. Also presented are the later *Four Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 12* (1912), which are considerably more subdued, unquestionably of early-20th-century vintage, but thoroughly accessible. Here the influence of Debussy can be heard, most literally in the intermezzo movement.

Suite No. 1, Op. 3 (1905) is an extroverted tapestry with alluring sonorities and swirling dance rhythms. It opens with a decidedly English "air," almost Elgarian; in the second movement it turns into a splashy, colorful rendition of what might be called "Nights in the Gardens of Hungary." Bartók later omitted the title "Leaping Dance" from one of the later movements; nevertheless, it adequately conveys the feel of the music. This is the record (SEFD 5006) for those who are afraid of Bartók. It is filled out with *Two Portraits Op. 5* (1907/1908), the first of which is Bartók's musical reminiscence of his passion for a lady. He calls it a "musical portrait of the idealized Stefi Geyer, transcendent and intimate." It is gentle music.

Bartók's *Suite No. 2, Op. 4* (SEFD 5007) coincided with his discovery of Debussy and of original Hungarian folk music, both of which he found in some essentials similar. However, this music sounds less "folksy" than *Suite No. 1,* which he based in part on ersatz folk music. The first three movements were originally entitled "Serenade," though parts of the "Allegro" have almost symphonic power. They seem to press for a Brucknerian climax, but dissolve instead into gentle impressionistic beauty. The last movement has momentary hints of a Mahler adagio. This is lovely, serene music, but not of the confectionary kind.

The Concerto for Orchestra (1943), Bartók's last and most popular orchestral piece, is considered by many to be a masterpiece. It is more than an orchestral showpiece, and is magnificently communicated in this recording (Sefel SEFD 5009), but it is less than profoundly moving.

Leoš Janáček (1854-1928) wrote music with a compelling vision; he is, in Bernard Jacobson's phrase, "essentially a vertical composer." Oddly, it has taken a half-century since his death for it to emerge before a wide audience. Such long neglect would have meant permanent obscurity for music of less conviction and fire. Janáček, like Bartók, began with 19th-century romanticism, but abandoned it for folk-inflected music of national consciousness as he began to model his music on the speech patterns of the Czech language. This hardly seems a recipe for international acclaim. Yet, especially in his later music, there is an appealing strain of searching for the inexpressible. Janáček's music is expressively "human"; there is no abstracted sterility to it, no disembodied sounds of a musical design meeting the autonomous requirements of some system. Janáček, as did Mozart in his own way, anthropomorphizes the orchestra. The instruments become human voices. In Mozart they sing; in Janáček they speak, or attempt to.

Janáček wrote *Idyla for String Orchestra* in 1878, at age 24. While it lacks the idiosyncratic flavor of his later "speech-melody," there are still many conventional pleasures to be had from this melodious idyll in the Dvořákian vein. Paired with it on a Nonesuch digital release (D-79033) is the much later *Mladi*

Mr. Reilly is with the Public Liaison Office in Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for wind sextet, whose title translates as "youth," and which was written by a 70-year-old Janáček. The freshness, infectiousness, and rhythmic bounce bespeak the title. The performances by Gerard Schwartz and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra are beguiling.

For those who know only the Janáček of blazing horns, thundering timpani, and crying voices, his piano oeuvre, with its intimacy and modest scale, will come as a surprise. The intensity (*not* freneticism), though, is there. This is not cool impressionism; nature is not being impersonally evoked in shimmering reflections *de l'eau.* Rather, it is deeply expressive of human feelings. Nonesuch has released a digital recording (79041) containing haunting, nocturnal music of moving simplicity and directness. Ivan Moravec's performances are sublime.

Sir Charles Mackerras has undertaken a major Janáček recording project for London Records, which has included the *Sinfonietta* and *Taras Bulba* and Janáček's operas *Kátya Kabanová* and *The Makropulos Case.* Now, London Records has released *The Cunning Little Vixen* (LDR 72010) and *From the House of the Dead* (LDR 10036), both digital recordings of the Vienna Philharmonic. Janáček was as eccentric in his choice of opera subjects as his music is original. *Kátya Kabanová* is about adultery and suicide; *The Makropulos Case* is about the despair of a woman who seemingly could not die, and her relief in finally doing so after 300 years. *The Cunning Little Vixen* was inspired by a cartoon strip depicting the adventures of a vixen in both human society and the forest. *From The House of the Dead* is based on Dostoevski's novel of the same name.

The Cunning Little Vixen intermingles animal and human in novel fashion. The two are distinct but interact within nature, which enfolds them both within cyclical currents of loss and renewal. The love duet between the fox and the vixen is as dramatic and sensuous as opera has to offer. The music is neither cute nor syrupy; it is filled with delights and great energy, e.g., the vixen's wedding and the ballet for the fox cubs. The opera spends its last scene with the gamekeeper, who reflects in a long, autumnal monologue on the mysteries and magic of nature, which he knows is overtaking him as well. We are left with the mixture of old age in spring, of sweetness and pain. Janáček called this opera "a merry piece with a sad end." The end so moved him that he asked for it to be played when he died.

With *From the House of the Dead,* we enter the gloom of a czarist prison camp. But the gloom is not overwhelming. In fact, this opera is tremendously exhilarating, with a compactly powerful and moving score; straining for the inexpressible reaches of the spirit, it almost shouts to God. On the title page of this opera Janáček inscribed, "in every creature a spark of God." During its composition (his last), he said: "I'm finishing perhaps my greatest work—this latest opera. I feel so excited as if my blood wanted to gush out." Yes, that's evident. This is a work of extremes, veering between desperation and hysterical joy; it is exhausting but not enervating, and there are lyrical respites. It is one of the most original, powerful works in the world of opera. The London recording is definitive in its exciting performance and its spectacular sonics.

Laurel Records has provided a nice release of piano trios by Rubin Goldmark, Haydn, and Beethoven (LR-112). This is fourth in a series featuring the excellent playing of the Western Arts Trio. Haydn's *Trio, HOB XV, No. 27 in C* is a delicious piece that reminds us that Haydn should never be underrated because of his lack of neuroses. Balance, grace, and energy within a restraint that gives it power, are all present in this lucid work. More enjoyment follows in Beethoven's *Trio Opus Posthumous in B Flat,* a single-movement allegretto of sweet and mild disposition. The novelty is Rubin Goldmark's *Trio Opus 1 in D Minor,* heard here in its first recording. Rubin Goldmark, nephew of Karl Goldmark, the opera composer, was student of Dvořák and teacher of such notables as Aaron Copland and George Gershwin. This music, though, is solidly aligned with its dedicatee, Dvořák, who must have been pleased with its mellifluous charm and melodic grace. The Western Arts Trio's performances and sound match this excellence. □

ART

Strange but Suggestive

Michel Foucault: *This Is Not a Pipe;* University of California Press; Berkeley.

by Stephen Macaulay

Marx and Engels were wrong. Not surprisingly. Religion is not the people's narcotic. Artisanal productions, or, more precisely, "vulgar art"—popular novels, greeting-card verse, movies, art-fair paintings—tend(s) to be. People have been and are lulled into a set pattern of expectations. For example, narratives should have, they silently insist, a formula, the last figure of which is: "And they lived happily ever after." One reason why Hitchcock's productions are considered films (elite) rather than movies (vulgar) is that he refrained from employing this grid. Just as people can't stand to permit a ringing telephone to go unanswered—even when they know that they aren't the addressee of the message-in-the-making—they cannot handle loose ends. Nor flexible beginnings. This is clear in the treatment of paintings. Several artists—Klee, Kandinsky—are often designated through various monikers; *abstract* is the handiest. These painters indicate, on one level, that a painting is a painting by providing "illustrations" that cannot be captured

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in an easy designation: "Ah, a bowl of fruit . . . a seascape . . . an undressed woman . . ." This approach also causes the dreamer to awaken—and often to turn away.

Another methodology is that used by René Magritte, the subject of Michel Foucault's text. Magritte was a surrealist: he worked with and from the obviously real. Although Magritte used the medium of paint, he thought himself to be a thinker. That concept, in itself, is jarring: thinkers are conventionally thought to be those who communicate between cardboard covers. Magritte's paintings are visible examples of what a Russian Formalist, Shklovsky, called *ostranenie:* defamiliarization. Magritte used quotidian objects but set them in contexts that subvert their regular significations. The painting referred to in the title of the book, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe,* shows a conventional smoker's pipe (the type that Inspector Maigret, for example, uses) with the words of the title appearing in a neat, standard, cursive design directly below it. The painting is not a pipe, it is a painting . . . the words comprised by the sentence are not a pipe, they are words . . . Loose ends and more loose ends. While this may seem to be nothing more than high-level game playing, there is something to be said for *ostranenie,* particularly in today's world, wherein people are never-endingly gullible: Cronkite used to intone "That's the way it is . . ." as if he were referring to a set, specific reality, not the world according to CBS; novels by best-selling low- and highbrows portray relationships as if to indicate that to be happily married is to be perverse. People need to be roused from this drugged sleep.

The text is Foucault at his typical. Some call him "allusive"; a less euphemistic term is *sloppy.* For example, he writes of two versions of *Ceci n'est pas une pipe,* "the first version" and "the other version" ("the last," I assume), and considers the two in opposition, as if there are two and only two. The chapter title: "Two Pipes." Binary. Closed. However, as translator and editor James Harkness points out in a footnote: "Actually, Magritte's pipe and its wry subscript appear in a whole series of paintings and drawings." A serious oversight. Then there is the common Foucaultian disclaimer, the remark that appears every now and then in his work that essentially says: "Look, this is really tentative; don't blame me if I'm wrong: I warned you." One example: "About even this ambiguity, however, I am ambiguous." Nothing like a little fog to help one see one's way clear. There is one word that is, correctly, used to describe Foucault's works: *suggestive.* That cannot be denied. However, in the right context, French fries are, too. □

Misconceptions, Misrepresentations, and Serendipities

Edward Lucie-Smith: *Art in the Seventies;* A Phaidon Book/Cornell University Press; Ithaca, NY.

Claude Lévi-Strauss: *The Way of the Masks;* University of Washington Press; Seattle.

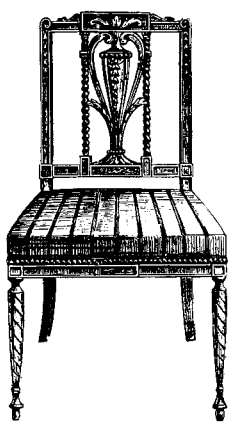
Dorothy Jean Ray: *Eskimo Masks;* University of Washington Press; Seattle.

Edwin S. Hall, Jr., Margaret B. Blackman, Vincent Rickard: *Northwest Coast Indian Graphics;* University of Washington Press; Seattle.

Audrey Hawthorn: *Kwakiutl Art;* University of Washington Press; Seattle.

Dorothy Jean Ray: *Eskimo Art;* University of Washington Press; Seattle.

An overview of what has been done during the 1970's with the help of brush, easel, hammer, chisel, wrench, fingers, camera, glue, bulldozer, high-powered crane, and aerosol spray. *Art in the Seventies* is all quite interesting, even amusing on occasion, but an overriding question is: What does three-quarters of the reproduced stuff have in common with art? The subsequent question: Is every visual rearrangement and reproduction of historical reality art? And a following one: Are there no longer any philosophical and aesthetic canons to regulate the previous question? And the final one: Does just anything that we may see have



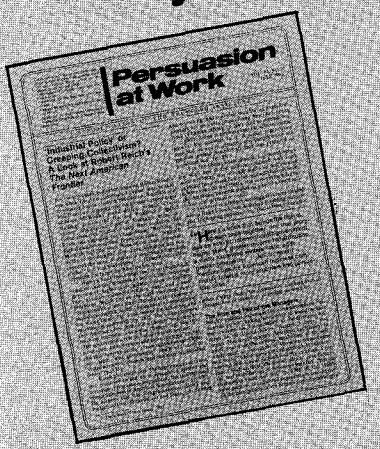
the right to call itself artistic representation? And the ultimate one: If it is so, what do we do with Fra Angelico and Picasso?

* * *

In contrast is the series published by the University of Washington Press over the last few years in which a totemistic and primitivist Indian and Eskimo concept of decorative visualness from the Northwest Coast and Alaska provides an astounding and enriching experience. The graphic wealth of expression encompassed by these carvings, paintings, and weaving not only presents boundless riches of imagination—which are so sorely twisted into aberration and so pretentiously faked as artist's natural gift by the titans of the 1970's—but also recreates the universe and humanness in the subtlest of vibrations and hues. No wrenches or spray paint necessary here, just the most rudimentary tools and authentic talent, if not genius. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"*Persuasion At Work* . . . tells how we might work more effectively to counter the spoilers of the American system."



—*Ed Feulner*
President, The Heritage Foundation
from a nationally syndicated column

"I'm impressed with the arguments marshalled by a newsletter called *Persuasion At Work*."

—*Rance Crane*
Editor-in-chief,
Crane's Chicago Business

Persuasion At Work is a newsletter specifically designed to keep the businessman apprised of the important developments in the opinion-making contest. Each month we offer an analysis of a publication, an organization or a movement pushing public attitudes one way or the other on an issue of importance to the business community.

These commentaries are drawn from direct sources including attendance at the meetings of activist groups, study of their promotional literature and monitoring of their periodicals.

In this era when "corporate responsibility" has become a bludgeon used by activist groups to force corporations to meet their demands, a new level of understanding is needed by the businessman to hold his own in a kind of contest for which he has had little preparation.

Persuasion At Work is a sentinel resource to help guard a poorly protected flank.

Subscribe to *Persuasion At Work*

☐ Please send me a one-year subscription to *Persuasion At Work* (12 issues) for $10.00.

SEND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:
Persuasion At Work
The Rockford Institute
934 North Main Street
Rockford, IL 61103

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter from Hilton Head Island: Enjoy & Reflect

by E. Stake Salisbury

Dinah . . .
Is there anyone finer
In the State of Carolina
—An old standard

An obscure and inexorably forgotten Canadian author by the name of Curwood once wrote a short story entitled "Great White Silence"; it was about snow-covered expanses in Alaska, or somewhere around the North Pole. The noun "silence" stood, of course, for something menacing and deadly. It doesn't connote that anymore in the minds of big-city and suburbia dwellers. Actually, it is closer to words like "bliss" or "paradise," if we consider the amount of sufferings inflicted upon us just by the sound of power mowers. One of the few ineptitudes of the U.S. travel industry is its disregard for the riches that can be mined from places that may offer silence in conjunction with sun, beach, ocean, and native dishes. Hilton Head Island, a resort off the South Carolina coast, does not invoke this attraction in its advertising either. Yet, divided into well-guarded and carefully separated "plantations," it markets, if semiconsciously, a sort of lush, green silence. This kind of serenity could be promoted, of course, as antebellum silence, a description not easily defensible and vulnerable to a variety of modish reproaches from the updated part of the contemporary Yankee mentality. Thus, even as style—tourism's Holy Grail—may actually prove to be the island's most attractive merchandise, the antebellum factor is rarely, and only in the most tactful way, mentioned.

The Yankee trek to Hilton Head has an intriguing historical dimension. As early as November 1861, the island was in the North's hands: 13,000 Union troops landed there, routed the Confederate forces, and established their presence for the duration of the Civil War. The current Yankee presence has swollen to some half a million visitors per year. The Union soldiers built a stronghold called Fort Mitchell, where today we may find one of the best restaurants in the area, a powerful rampart of what's most refined in Low Country cuisine, a telling symbol of what the North never conquered in that fateful confrontation of cultures a century ago. There are countless examples of successful reconciliation between the then-implacable enemies, and its contemporaneity seems to be purified of that long-ago hatred. Hardly a more magnanimous and soothing revenge could be imagined than a superb Confederate eatery erected on the site of the Union bastion of arms, in which descendants of the Northern invaders now pay enthusiastic tribute to the Carolinian way of preparing soft-shell crab.

Hilton Head's significance for cultural contentions goes deeper and further. If there is a battleground (such terminology may not be the best word to describe a conglomerate of subtropical charms, beguiling greenery, and some of the best seafood in this hemisphere) where a palpable conflict between modern America's flavors, tastes, and sensitivities is right now taking place—that's where it is. Nowhere, perhaps, is the contest of styles so comfortably observable as here. It goes beyond mere externalties, touching the profundities of personified Americanism, and defines men and women in their midlife term who are reasonably prosperous, middle-class, and eager to participate in the formation of the very current American image. This is a tug-of-war between preppiness and the idealism of joggers—nicely genteel, suffused with smiles and morning greetings. Of course, it is cultural in substance. Obfuscations are inevitable; some preppies jog for health reasons, and most play tennis as a matter of honor. There's ample evidence, however, that jogging has become a subculture with all its consequences. It has created a sweaty, puffing model of a human being, one who pursues an ideal of infinite and ultimate perspiration. The jogger is mostly (but not always, so help me God!) overweight and has a beard—this is the stereotype, studded admittedly with innumerable examples to the contrary of svelte, beautifully athletic runners of both genders. Actually, my generalizations are beside the point, for what the jogger of the last 15 years has finally come to symbolize, mostly in big cities, is the discord between the lanky and decently clad American and the obese and disrobed American. The former, as he was visualized by Hollywood movies of the 1930's through 50's, announced to the world his tidy lankiness overlaid with Brooks Brothers charisma, which succeeded in ingraining itself in the world's consciousness as a victorious American emblem. The latter displays to the world his hairy armpits and the pimples on his chest and declares them manifestations of humanness and health, both physical and mental. Let's be honest—preppiness in itself is not the complete moral stance (in spite of posing as such) that its followers are eager to affect at each step. The preppy sports have long since lost their aura of pure chivalry and unconditional virtue. One muscular juvenile, devoted to preppy faith, told me once that golf is the easiest way to make money for anyone with both a hefty torso and preference for personal nattiness.

Hilton Head Island, looked upon as a cultural encounter, offers some insight into the vibrations and the nature of the strife. The atmosphere of cautiously delineated, pleasant middle-class snobbery is so pervasive, but at the same time so well-detached from the shallowness of the big-time, superwealthy snobbism, that it is more rewarding than amusing. There are traditions for this propitious differentiation in the region. A Carolinian scholar told me a beautiful story about a little island, St. Helen, in the Beaufort

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

County coastal archipelago. When the news about Napoleon's irrevocable exile arrived in Savannah and Charleston, it was immediately assumed that the deposed emperor would come there. An avalanche of social activities, parties, balls, and festivities was planned—although the sentiments about Bonaparte might have been somewhat mixed by that time. Preppies would have understood both the excitement *and* the need for some pluralistic equanimity. Joggers, as they mostly incorporate liberal feelings, would probably have forgotten the Napoleonic code and focused on his imperialism. This is exactly the trouble we have in connecting equanimity with liberalism these days. □

The American Proscenium

High Technology

A founder of the Contadora group (the latest Latin American forum of political conscience), Mexican Foreign Minister Mr. Bernardo Sepúlveda Amor, shares in a *Time* magazine interview the Latin American notion of representative and pluralistic democracy:

> We do not think that the Nicaraguan opposition can legitimize its position through the use of force. On the contrary, we think that right now the Nicaraguan authorities are doing their best to find a mechanism by which political parties will be able to function in that society.

This is exactly what Stalin told Roosevelt and Churchill in Yalta about how the Soviet puppet regimes in post-World War II Eastern Europe would evolve their "mechanisms." Roosevelt and Churchill bought it. We know what happened next. And now, almost four decades later, *Time* is still buying it. Mr. Sepúlveda Amor is presented as "The stylish, eloquent former professor of international law . . . actively involved in seeking a peaceful solution to the conflicts in Central America." □

Journalism

Time's Precision

Time's shining light in the domain of publicistics, Mr. Hugh Sidey, instructs Ronald Reagan on why and how we should be cautious and measured in flexing America's military muscle:

> Twice in the past four decades we miscalculated, and we had war in Korea and Viet Nam.

What did we "miscalculate" in Korea? On June 25, 1950, with no prior indications of an armed conflict, North Korean troops—equipped, trained, and tactically instructed by Soviet supervisors—massively attacked the internationally and legally determined border between the two Koreas and invaded the South. The free world, under America's leadership, was brutally confronted with a historical fact, coerced to respond, and had not a modicum of other choices but to go to war. The only other available option would have been an unconditional surrender, allowing the despairing South Koreans to be red rather than dead. So how did we miscalculate? What chance did we have to miscalculate anything?

An even more blatant case of precision

The Choice

The last time a British writer won the Nobel Prize in Literature was 1953, unless Samuel Beckett (1969), an Irishman who can be identified with France, or Elias Canetti (1981), a Bulgarian who resides in England, is bent to fit the category. Curiously enough, the 1953 presentation was made not to one of the country's novelists, playwrights, or poets, but to Sir Winston Churchill. Clearly, England was overdue. The selection of William Golding for the 1983 prize is surprising, as he is, although a serviceable enough stylist, really a two-book man: *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *The Spire* (1964). In the first he essentially shows that Rousseau's garden is no place that anyone would want to live in—and certainly not die in; the latter delineates man's reach and the elusiveness of a handhold. During the 10 years between the two books and in the nearly 20 years since *The Spire* Golding has continued to produce books, none of which has had any significant cosmopolitan effect. The Nobel is still the premier literary award, so one would expect the recipients to be like Caesar's wife. In this case—as in others during recent years—that isn't so. Robert Graves and Lawrence Durrell would be more defensible choices, yet even they lack the breadth of vision that a Nobel laureate should be expected to have. And then there's Graham Greene, who has been long waiting in the wings and who certainly exhibits all of the manners necessary to be in sync with the "progressive" sympathies of the Stockholm academy. Given the time frame, Greene should slip out of the theater. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of idea and style a la *Time* may be found in its piece on South Dakota's governor William Janklow, whom *Time* obviously dislikes because he is a conservative Republican and is effectively bringing prosperity to his state in keeping with conservative and Republican precepts. So here's how it goes:

> Quiet discretion is not his strong suit. Earlier this year the Governor filed two libel suits against publishers because they had repeated an unproven allegation that Janklow raped an Indian teenager in 1967.

It's hard to understand *Time's* peevish grudge. What are they ranting against? That Gov. Janklow, innocent as he may be, tries to defend himself from the poisonous mendacity of the press, for whom *Time* is a spiritual leader? Do *Time's* editors really believe that discretion is meek acknowledgment of misdeeds one did not commit? Do they ever consult their *Webster's?* □

Epistemological Chutzpah

One Lawrence Barrett—*Time* magazine's senior editor who blew the whistle on Carter's purloined briefing papers in his book on Reagan and whom *Parade,* the lowbrow Sunday gossip magazine, calls "distinguished," "knowledgeable," and "insightful"—bares his mental acumen for the aforementioned sheet in an interview about the President:

> [He is] often too rigid for his own good and the country's good . . .

How does Mr. Barrett know so objectively and unequivocally what *is* the "country's good"? The mightiest of intellects among scholars, statesmen, and politicians have endless doubts about their knowledge of such an abstruse and complex matter, and they deeply differ on it. For Mr. Barrett there are no mysteries involved; he has an answer with the snap of his fingers. If we wanted to pass judgments by snapping out ready-to-wear answers, we would have said that what Mr. Barrett knows and puts into books or articles is pure trash. Is this correct?

Which, in turn, brings us to what beyond any reasonable doubt *is* trash, weekly disseminated by one Cheryl Lavin of the *Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine.* Ms. Lavin interviews celebrities and demicelebrities. Not long ago she featured one Nora Harlow, a journalist specializing in sex therapy. Her included picture reveals Ms. Harlow as a young, wholesome-looking woman with an extraordinary amount of idiocy emanating from her eyes. Ms. Lavin asks a question of stupendous stupidity:

> Lack of desire—isn't that a *new* sex

The Signification of Silence

The following letter, a rejoinder, was sent on June 2 to the *New York Times* by Mr. Leopold Tyrmand who, in his role as the Secretary of the Executive Council of The Ingersoll Prizes, took exception to a piece written by Russell Baker, the *Times'* coveted columnist:

To the Editor:

Russell Baker's feuilleton of May 25 ("And His Mouth So Prim") had a tone of warmhearted, if slightly obfuscated, grievance. It berated us for having adopted T. S. Eliot as patron saint of The Ingersoll Prize for Literature. Whether or not Eliot was convincingly conservative enough to serve us properly, or we are too suspiciously conservative to invoke his name, remains unclear in Mr. Baker's reasoning.

Eliot's relation with Orwell was given as proof of his defective conservatism. True, as an editor at Faber & Faber in London, Eliot did turn down the manuscript of *Animal Farm* in 1944. So did about 14 other English publishers. Mr. Baker wrote that Eliot "used his influence to prevent publication." This seems to me rather a celebration of transient gossip: in a letter to Eliot (June 28, 1944) Orwell distinctly pointed out that the decision of publishing *Animal Farm* by "Messrs. Faber & Faber" may not have rested with Eliot alone. What Orwell thought about Eliot was best specified in *The Listener* (March 19, 1942): He "brought back the sense of history and the possibility of tragedy" to English literature. I cannot imagine a more succinct and profound acknowledgment of Eliot's conservatism and importance.

Our ideological spuriousness is implied by Mr. Baker with the help of phrases taken out of context from our statement of purpose and welded together in an implausible manner. Yet, despite Mr. Baker's disapproval, we are quite able to demonstrate that modern liberalism, its humanitarian and pluralistic heritage notwithstanding, has evolved some exclusionary attitudes and practices in culture. It is conservatives who seem today to be the defenders of the Western concept of freedom—which is supposed to confer strictly equal rights on every opinion, persuasion, denomination, and conviction.

Leopold Tyrmand
Secretary of the Executive Committee
The Ingersoll Prizes

The letter never appeared. This is rather curious, considering the dependent clause in its final sentence, which takes a more comprehensive, open-armed approach to equality of opinion than *Chronicles* does, but which seems to sum up the sentiments espoused by the *New York Times* on both its news and opinion pages. Perhaps the nonappearance of the letter is a silent signifier of the *Times'* attitude toward The Ingersoll Prizes, one that indicates that things are not as they seem. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

problem?

And Ms. Harlow delivers an answer which is sui generis a masterpiece and monument of imbecility:

> Absolutely. It's so new that some physicians don't even know about it. But sex therapists now know why couples who are together a long time lose their desire. It's a biological trick. Couples think it's natural. 'We've known each other so long there's no more magic.' That's not it. It's that they just don't take the time to do all the things that once turned them on. Actually, anyone with a sex problem has a desire problem. But there are solutions. These are what I mean by secrets of sex therapy.

Kamasutra was completed sometime around 400 B.C. and is probably one of the latecomers in mankind's knowledge about the lack of desire—which Ms. Harlow deems an "absolutely . . . new sex problem." Has it ever occurred to her that the current dilemma of spreading sexual apathy may have something to do with the proliferation of half-educated propagandists for sleaze sex therapy like herself? □

Fideism

In *The Nation,* whose basic reigning philosophy is—to the best of our knowledge—rigid dialectical materialism, we find a fine example of how smoothly this allegedly scientific and empirical ideology turns into mystical fideism. One Sidney Lens, an intrepid apologist for any Sovietized thing on earth, writes:

> Cubans have the highest standard of living in Latin America, with the possible exception of urban areas in Argentina and Uruguay.

How easily blind faith in miracles presaged by doctrine wins out over empiricism, data, reason, and research. Anyone without Marxian blinders knows that the Cuban quality of life *may* be higher than that of the Samoyeds in northern Siberia, but that's about it. □

California Review

California Review is

"Lively, literate, and fun to read."—**William F. Buckley, Jr.**

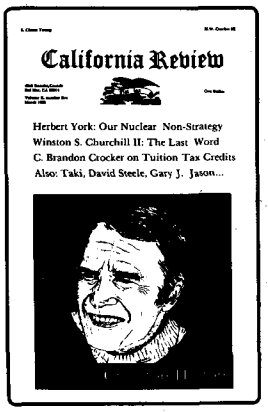
"An important publication."—**Charlton Heston**

California Review is intellectual SEX and VIOLENCE on a large scale. Six times a year we bring you high class erotica: articles like *On the Pleasant Necessity of Gender—Role Differentiation, Women and A Great America, Lady Macbeth: Feminist Idol, Suzanne Schott on Jerry Falwell,* and titillating interviews with Phyllis Shlafly (SEX goddess of the Right) and Marva Collins (America's SEXIEST black educator).

And talk about VIOLENCE! We featured articles on the *Violent Pacifists, The Professorial Deception: Marxism, Feminism, and Didactic Dissolution,* and *Afghanistan and the Compassionate Left.* Moreover, we interviewed Walter Williams and heard him flail away at the so-called black leadership and we interviewed Neil Reagan (the President's brother) to get his opinion on what to do with Ed Asner.

If you'd like to read an outrageous journal that is roughly 10 times better than *The Dartmouth Review,* that features interviews with the likes of Milton Friedman, Clarence Pendleton, Charlton Heston, and Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, that showcases the best in iconoclastic conservative collegiate journalism, and which elicits enthusiastic huzzahs from George Will, Midge Decter, and Milton Friedman, then you should subscribe to California Review, "the model conservative student newspaper."*

*Art Kaufman of the American Enterprise Institute.


California Review
Herbert York: Our Nuclear Non-Strategy
Winston S. Churchill II: The Last Word
C. Brandon Crocker on Tuition Tax Credits
Also: Taki, David Steele, Gary J. Jason...

Dear Sirs:
I want to help save the American Republic. Please send me six issues of *California Review* so I may have the necessary ammunition to defend my spouse, family, and country from the barbarians (liberals) who surround us. Enclosed is my check for $10.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Send to California Review
P.O. Box 12286
La Jolla, CA 92037
All contributions are tax-deductable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED